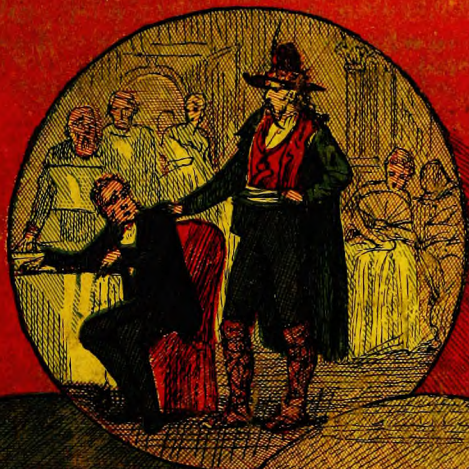


PAUL GOSSLETT'S CONFESSIONS

In
Love
Law
and

The
Civil
Service



BY CHARLES LEVER



JAMES H. GRAFF,

BALTIMORE

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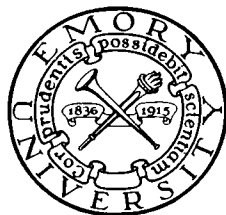
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PAUL GOSSLETT'S CONFESSIONS.

BY
CHARLES LEVER,

AUTHOR OF
"THE MARTINS OF CRO' MARTIN,"
"TOM BURKE OF 'OURS,'" "
"DAVENPORT DUNN,"
"THE O'DONOGHUB,"
"THE DALTONS,"
"BARRINGTON,"
ETC.

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PAUL GOSSLETT'S CONFESSIONS.

MY FIRST MISSION UNDER F.O.

I WAS walking very sadly across the Green Park one day, my hat pressed over my eyes, not looking to right or left, but sauntering slowly along, depressed and heavy-hearted, when I felt a friendly arm slip softly within my own, while a friendly voice said—

“I think I have got something to suit you, for a few months at least. Don’t you know Italian?”

“In a fashion, I may say I do. I can read the small poets, and chat a little. I’ll not say much more about my knowledge.”

“Quite enough for what I mean. Now tell me another thing. You’re not a very timid fellow I know. Have you any objection to

going amongst the brigands in Calabria,—on a friendly mission, of course,—where it will be their interest to treat you well?”

“Explain yourself a little more freely. What is it I should have to do?”

“Here’s the whole affair; the son of a wealthy baronet, a Wiltshire M.P., has been captured and carried off by these rascals. They demand a heavy sum for his ransom, and give a very short time for the payment. Sir Joseph, the youth’s father, is very ill, and in such a condition as would make any appeal to him highly dangerous; the doctors declare, in fact, it would be fatal; and Lady Mary S. has come up to town, in a state bordering on distraction, to consult Lord Scatterdale, the Foreign Secretary, who is a personal friend of her husband. The result is that his lordship has decided to pay the money at once; and the only question is now to find the man to take it out, and treat with these scoundrels.”

“That ought not to be a very difficult matter, one would say; there are scores of fellows with pluck for such a mission.”

“So there are, if pluck were the only requisite; but something more is needed. If Sir Joseph should not like to acknowledge the debt,—if, on his recovery, he should come to think that the thing might have been better managed, less cost incurred, and so on,—the Government will feel embarrassed; they can’t well quarrel with an old supporter; they can’t well stick the thing in the estimates; so that, to cover the outlay in some decent fashion, they must give it a public-service look before they can put it into the Extraordinaries; and so Lord S. has hit upon this scheme. You are aware that a great question is now disputed between the Bourbonists of Naples and the party of New Italy,—whether brigandage means highway robbery, or is the outburst of national enthusiasm in favour of the old dynasty. The friends of King Bomba, of course, call it a ‘La Vendée;’ the others laugh at this, and say that the whole affair is simply assassination and robbery, and totally destitute of any political colouring. Who knows on which side the truth lies, or whether some portion of truth

does not attach to each of these versions? Now, there are, as you said awhile ago, scores of fellows who would have pluck enough to treat with the brigands; but there are not so many who could be trusted to report of them,—to give a clear and detailed account of what he saw of them,—of their organisation, their sentiments, their ambitions, and their political views, if they have any. You are just the man to do this. You have that knack of observation and that readiness with your pen which are needed. In fact, you seem to me the very fellow to do this creditably.”

“Has Lord S. any distinct leanings in the matter?” asked I. “Does he incline to regard these men as political adherents, or as assassins, ‘purs et simples’?”

“I see what you mean,” said my friend, pinching my arm. “You want to know the tone of your employer before you enter his service. You would like to be sure of the tints that would please him.”

“Perhaps so. I won’t go so far as to say it would frame my report, but it might serve to

tinge it. Now, do you know his proclivities, as Jonathan would call them ?”

“I believe they are completely with the Italian view of the matter. I mean, he will not recognise anything political in these scoundrels.”

“I thought as much. Now as to the appointment. Do you think you could obtain it for me ?”

“You are ready to take it, then ?”

“Perfectly.”

“And ready to start at once ?”

“To-night.”

“Come back with me now, and I will inquire if Lord S. will see us. He spoke to me yesterday evening on the matter, and somehow your name did not occur to me, and I certainly recommended another man ;—Hitchins of the ‘Daily News ;’ but I am sure he will not have sent for him yet, and that we shall be in good time.”

As we walked back towards Downing Street my friend talked on incessantly about the advantages I might derive from doing this

thing creditably. They were sure to make a Blue Book out of my report, and who knows if my name would not be mentioned in the House? At all events, the newspapers would have it; and the Government would be obliged,—they couldn't help giving me something. "You'll have proved yourself a man of capacity," said he, "and that's enough. S. does like smart fellows under him, he is so quick himself; sees a thing with half an eye, and reads a man just as he reads a book." He rattled along in this fashion, alternately praising the great man and assuring me that I was exactly the sort of fellow to suit him. "He'll not burden you with instructions, but what he tells you will be quite sufficient; he is all clearness, conciseness, and accuracy. There's only one caution I have to give you,—don't ask him a question, follow closely all he says, and never ask him to explain anything that puzzles you. To suppose that he has not expressed himself clearly is a dire offence, mind that; and now here we are. Crosby, is my lord upstairs?" asked he of the porter; and receiving

a bland nod in reply, he led the way to the Minister's cabinet.

"I'll ask to see him first myself," whispered he, as he sent in his card.

Now, though my friend was an M.P. and a staunch supporter of the party, he manifested a considerable amount of anxiety and uneasiness when waiting for the noble secretary's reply. It came at last.

"Can't possibly see you now, sir. Will meet you at the House at five o'clock."

"Will you kindly tell his lordship I have brought with me the gentleman I spoke to him about yesterday evening? He will know for what."

The private secretary retired, sullenly, and soon returned to say, "The gentleman may come in; my lord will speak to him."

The next moment I found myself standing in a comfortably furnished room, in front of a large writing-table, at which an elderly man with a small head, scantily covered with grey hair, was writing. He did not cease his occupation as I entered, nor notice me in any man-

ner as I approached, but went on repeating to himself certain words as he wrote them ; and at last laying down his pen, said aloud, with a faint chuckle, "and your Excellency may digest it how you can."

I gave a very slight cough. He looked up, stared at me, arose, and, walking to the fire, stood with his back to it for a couple of seconds without speaking. I could see that he had some difficulty in dismissing the topic which had just occupied him, and was only arriving at me by very slow stages and heavy roads.

"Eh !" said he, at last ; "you are the man of the paper. Not the 'Times'—but the—the—what's it ?"

"No, my lord. I'm the other man," said I, quietly.

"Ah, you're the other man." And as he spoke, he hung his head, and seemed hopelessly lost in thought. "Have you seen Mr. Hammil ?" asked he.

"No, my lord."

"You must see Mr. Hammil. Till you see Mr. Hammil, you needn't come to me."

“Very well, my lord,” said I, moving towards the door.

“Wait a moment. You know Italy well, I am told. Do you know Cavour?”

“No, my lord,” said I.

“Ah! They say he over-eats; have you heard that?”

“I can’t say that I have, my lord; but my acquaintance with Italy and with Italians is very slight indeed.”

“Why did they recommend you, then, for this affair? I told Gresson that I wanted a man who could have ready access to their public men, who knew Balbi, Gino Capponi, Ricasoli, and the rest of them. Now, sir, how is it possible, without intimacy with these men and their opinions, that you could write such leading articles as I suggested in their papers? How could you ever get admission to the columns of the ‘Opinione’ and the ‘Perseveranza,’ eh? Answer me that.”

“I am afraid, my lord, there is some grave misunderstanding here. I never dreamed of proposing myself for such a difficult task.

I came here on a totally different mission. It was to take your lordship's orders about the ransom and rescue of a young Englishman who has been captured by the brigands in Southern Italy——”

“That scamp St. John. A very different business, indeed. Why, sir, they value him at one thousand pounds, and I'll venture to assert that his friends,—if that be the name of the people who know him,—would call him a dear bargain at twenty. I'm certain his own father would say so; but, poor fellow, he is very ill, and can't talk on this or any other matter just now. Lady Mary, however, insists on his release, and we must see what can be done. You know the habits and ways of these rascals, — these brigands, — don't you?”

“No, my lord; nothing whatever about them.”

“Then, in Heaven's name, sir, what do you know?”

“Very little about anything, my lord, I must confess; but as I am sorely pushed to

find a livelihood, and don't fancy being a burden to my friends, I told Mr. Gresson this morning that I was quite ready to undertake the mission if I should be entrusted with it; and that, so far as bail or security went, my uncle Rankin, of Rankin and Bates, would unquestionably afford it."

"Ah, this is very different indeed," said he, ponderingly, and with a look of compassionate interest I had not thought his face capable of. "Gone too fast, perhaps; have been hit hard at Doncaster or Goodwood?"

"No, my lord; I never betted. I started with a few thousand pounds and lost them in a speculation."

"Well, well. I have no right to enter into these things. Go and see Mr. Temple, the financial clerk. Take this to him, and see what he says to you. If he is satisfied, come down to the House to-night. But stay! You ought to start this evening, oughtn't you?"

"I believe, my lord, the time is very short.

They require the money to be paid by the twelfth."

"Or they'll cut his ears off, I suppose," said he, laughing. "Well, he's an ugly dog already; not that cropping will improve him. Here, take this to Temple, and arrange the matter between you."

And he hurriedly wrote half a dozen lines, which he enclosed and addressed, and then returning to his seat, said, "Bonne Chance! I wish you success and a pleasant journey."

I will not dwell upon the much longer and more commonplace interview that followed. Mr. Temple knew all about me,—knew my uncle, and knew the whole story of my misfortunes. He was not, however, the less cautious in every step he took; and as the sum to be entrusted to me was so large, he filled in a short bail-bond, and, while I sat with him, despatched it by one of his clerks to Lombard Street, for my uncle's signature. This came in due time; and, furnished with instructions how to draw on the Paymaster-General, some current directions

how to proceed till I presented myself at the Legation at Naples, and a sum sufficient for the travelling expenses, I left London that night for Calais, and began my journey. If I was very anxious to acquit myself creditably in this my first employment in the public service, and to exhibit an amount of zeal, tact, and discretion that might recommend me for future employment, I was still not indifferent to the delights of a journey paid for at the Queen's expense, and which exacted from me none of those petty economies which mar the perfect enjoyment of travelling.

If I suffer myself to dwell on this part of my history I shall be ruined, for I shall never get on ; and you will, besides, inevitably, —and as unjustly as inevitably, —set me down for a snob.

I arrived at Naples at last. It was just as the day was closing in, but there was still light enough to see the glorious bay and the outline of Vesuvius in the background. I was, however, too full of my mission now to suffer my thoughts to wander to the pic-

turesque, and so I made straight for the Legation.

I had been told that I should receive my last instructions from H.M.'s Minister, and it was a certain Sir James Magruber that then held that office at Naples. I know so very little of people in his peculiar walk, that I can only hope he may not be a fair sample of his order, for he was the roughest, the rudest, and most uncourteous gentleman it has ever been my fortune to meet.

He was dressing for dinner when I sent up my card, and at once ordered that I should be shown up to his room.

"Where's your bag?" cried he roughly, as I entered.

Conceiving that this referred to my personal luggage, and was meant as the preliminary to inviting me to put up at his house, I said that I had left my "traps" at the hotel, and, with his permission, would instal myself there for the few hours of my stay.

"Confound your 'traps,' as you call them,"

said he. "I meant your despatches,—the bag from F.O. Ain't you the messenger?"

"No, sir; I am not the messenger," said I, haughtily.

"And what the devil do you mean, then, by sending me your card, and asking to see me at once?"

"Because my business is peremptory, sir," said I, boldly, and proceeded at once to explain who I was, and what I had come for. "To-morrow will be the tenth, sir," said I, "and I ought to be at Rocco d'Anco by the morning of the twelfth at farthest."

He was brushing his hair all the time I was speaking, and I don't think that he heard above half of what I said.

"And do you mean to tell me they are such infernal fools at F.O. that they're going to pay one thousand pounds sterling to liberate this scamp St. John?"

"I think, sir, you will find that I have been sent out with this object."

"Why, it's downright insanity! It is a thousand pities they hadn't caught the fellow

years ago. Are you aware that there's scarcely a crime in the statute-book he has not committed? I'd not say murder wasn't amongst them. Why, sir, he cheated me,—me,—the man who now speaks to you,—at billiards. He greased my cue, sir. It was proved,—proved beyond the shadow of a doubt. The fellow called it a practical joke, but he forgot I had five ducats on the game; and he had the bare-faced insolence to amuse Naples by a representation of me as I sided my ball, and knocked the marker down afterwards, thinking it was his fault. He was attached, this St. John was, to my mission here at the time; but I wrote home to demand,—not to ask, but demand,—his recall. His father's vote was, however, of consequence to the Government, and they refused me. Yes, sir, they refused me; they told me to give him a leave of absence if I did not like to see him at the Legation; and I gave it, sir. And, thank Heaven, the fellow went into Calabria, and fell into the hands of the brigands,—too good company for him, I'm certain. I'll be shot if he couldn't corrupt them;

and now you're come out here to pay a ransom for a fellow that any other country but England would send to the galleys."

"Has he done nothing worse, sir," asked I, timidly, "than this stupid practical joke?"

"What, sir, have you the face to put this question to me,—to H.M.'s Minister at this court,—the subject of this knavish buffoonery? Am I a fit subject for a fraud,—a—a freedom, sir? Is it to a house which displays the royal arms over the entrance-door men come to play blackleg or clown? Where have you lived;—with whom have you lived;—what pursuit in life have you followed,—that you should be sunk in such utter ignorance of all the habits of life and civilisation?"

I replied that I was a gentleman, I trusted as well educated, and I knew as well-born, as himself.

He sprang to the bell as I said this, and rang on till the room was crowded with servants, who came rushing in under the belief that it was a fire alarm.

"Take him away,—put him out,—Giacomo,

—Hippolyte,—Francis!” screamed he. “See that he’s out of the house this instant. Send Mr. Carlyon here. Let the police be called, and order gendarmes if he resists.”

While he was thus frothing and foaming I took my hat, and passing quietly through the ranks of his household, descended the stairs, and proceeded into the street.

I reached the “Vittoria” in no bland humour. I must own that I was flurried and irritated in no common degree. I was too much excited to be able clearly to decide how far the insult I had received required explanation and apology, or if it had passed the limits in which apology is still possible.

Perhaps, thought I, if I call him out he’ll hand me over to the police; perhaps he’ll have me sent over the frontier. Who knows what may be the limit to a Minister’s power? While I was thus speculating and canvassing with myself, a card was presented to me by the waiter—“Mr. Sponnington, Attaché, H.M.’s Legation, Naples,” and as suddenly the owner of it entered the room.

He was a fair-faced, blue-eyed young man, very short-sighted, with a faint lisp and an effeminate air. He bowed slightly as he came forward, and said, "You're Mr. Gosslett, ain't you?" And not waiting for any reply, he sat down and opened a roll of papers on the table. "Here are your instructions. You are to follow them when you can, you know, and diverge from them whenever you must. That is, do whatever you like, and take the consequences. Sir James won't see you again. He says you insulted him, but he says that of almost every one. The cook insults him when the soup is too salt, and I insulted him last week by writing with pale ink. But you'd have done better if you'd got on well with him. He writes home—do you understand?—he writes home."

"So do most people," I said, drily.

"Ah! but not the way he does. He writes home and has a fellow black-listed. Two crosses against you sends you to Greece, and three is ruin! Three means the United States."

"I assure you, sir, that as regards myself

your chief's good opinion or good word are matters of supreme indifference."

Had I uttered an outrageous blasphemy, he could not have looked at me with greater horror.

"Well," said he at last, "there it is; read it over. Bolton will cash your bills, and give you gold. You must have gold; they'll not take anything else. I don't believe there is much more to say."

"Were you acquainted with Mr. St. John?" asked I.

"I should think I was. Rodney-St. John and I joined together."

"And what sort of a fellow is he? Is he such a scamp as his chief describes?"

"He's fast, if you mean that; but we're all fast."

"Indeed!" said I, measuring him with a look, and thinking to compute the amount of his colleague's iniquity.

"But he's not worse than Stormont, or Mosely, or myself; only he's louder than we are. He must always be doing something no

other fellow ever thought of. Don't you know the kind of thing I mean? He wants to be original. Bad style that, very. That's the way he got into this scrape. He made a bet he'd go up to Rocco d'Anco, and pass a week with Stoppa, the brigand—the cruellest dog in Calabria. He didn't say when he'd come back again, though; and there he is still, and Stoppa sent one of his fellows to drop a letter into the Legation, demanding twenty-five thousand francs for his release, or saying that his ears, nose, &c., will be sent on by instalments during the month. Ugly, ain't it?"

"I trust I shall be in time to save him. I suspect he's a good fellow."

"Yes, I suppose he is," said he, with an air of uneasiness; "only I'd not go up there, where you're going, for a trifle, I tell you that."

"Perhaps not," said I, quietly.

"For," resumed he, "when Stoppa sees that you're a nobody, and not worth a ransom, he'd as soon shoot you as look at you." And this thought seemed to amuse him so

much that he laughed at it as he quitted the room and descended the stairs, and I even heard him cackling over it in the street.

Before I went to bed that night I studied the map of Calabria thoroughly, and saw that by taking the diligence to Atri the next day, I should reach Valdenone by about four o'clock, from which a guide could conduct me to Rocco d'Anco,—a mountain walk of about sixteen miles,—a feat which my pedestrian habits made me fully equal to. If the young attaché's attempt to terrorise over me was not a perfect success, I am free to own that my enterprise appeared to me a more daring exploit than I had believed it when I thought of it in Piccadilly. It was not merely that I was nearer to the peril, but everything conspired to make me more sensible to the danger. The very map, where a large tract was marked "little known," suggested a terror of its own; and I fell asleep at last, to dream of every wild incident of brigand life I had seen in pictures or witnessed on the stage.

As that bland young gentleman so candidly

told me, "I was a nobody," and consequently of no interest to any one. Who would think of sending out an express messenger to ransom Paul Gosslett? At all events I could console myself with the thought, that if the world would give little for me, it would grieve even less; and with this not very cheering consolation I mounted to the banquette of the diligence, and started.

After passing through a long, straggling suburb, not remarkable for anything but its squalor and poverty, we reached the sea-shore, and continued to skirt the bay for miles. I had no conception of anything so beautiful as the great sheet of blue water seen in the freshness of a glorious sunrise, with the white-sailed lateener skimming silently along, and reflected, as if in a mirror, on the unruffled surface. There was a peaceful beauty in all around, that was a positive enchantment, and the rich odours of the orange and the verbena filled the air almost to a sense of delicious stupefaction. Over and over did I say to myself, "Why cannot this delicious dream be

prolonged for a lifetime? If existence could but perpetuate such a scene as this, let me travel along the shore of such a sea, overshadowed by the citron and the vine,—I ask for no more.” The courier or conductor was my only companion,—an old soldier of the first empire, who had fought on the Beresina and in Spain,—a rough old sabreur, not to be appeased, by my best cigars and my brandy-flask, into a good word for the English. He hated them formerly, and he hated them still. There might be, he was willing to believe, one or two of the nation that were not cani; but he hadn’t met them himself, nor did he know any one who had. I relished his savagery, and somehow never felt in the slightest degree baffled or amazed by his rudeness. I asked him if he had heard of that unlucky countryman of mine who had been captured by the brigands, and he said that he had heard that Stoppa meant to roast him alive, for that Stoppa didn’t like the English,—a rather strong mode of expressing a national antipathy, but one, on the whole, he did not entirely disapprove of.

“Stoppa, however,” said I, assuming as a fact what I meant for a question,—“Stoppa is a man of his word. If he offered to take a ransom, he’ll keep his promise?”

“That he will, if the money is paid down in zecchin gold. He’ll take nothing else. He’ll give up the man; but I’d not fancy being the fellow who brought the ransom, if there was a light piece in the mass.”

“He’d surely respect the messenger who carried the money?”

“Just as much as I respect that old mare who won’t come up to her collar;” and he snatched the whip as he spoke from the driver, and laid a heavy lash over the sluggish beast’s loins. “Look here,” said he to me, as we parted company at Corallo, “you’re not bad,—for an Englishman, at least,—and I’d rather you didn’t come to trouble. Don’t you get any further into these mountains than St. Andrea, and don’t stay even there too long. Don’t go in Stoppa’s way; for if you have money, he’ll cut your throat for it, and if you haven’t, he’ll smash your skull for being

without it. I'll be on the way back to Naples on Saturday, and if you'll take a friend's advice you'll be beside me."

I was not sorry to get away from my old grumbling companion; but his words of warning went with me in the long evening's drive up to St. Andrea, a wild mountain road, over which I jogged in a very uncomfortable barroccino.

Was I really rushing into such peril as he described? And if so, why so? I could scarcely affect to believe that any motives of humanity moved me;—still less any sense of personal regard or attachment. I had never known—not even seen—Mr. St. John. In what I had heard of him there was nothing that interested me. It was true that I expected to be rewarded for my services; but if there was actual danger in what I was about to do, what recompense would be sufficient? And was it likely that this consideration would weigh heavily on the minds of those who employed me? Then, again, this narrative, or report, or whatever it was, how was I to find

the material for it? Was it to be imagined that I was to familiarise myself with brigand life by living amongst these rascals, so as to be able to make a Blue Book about them? Was it believed that I could go to them, like a census commissioner, and ask their names and ages, how long they had been in their present line of life, and how they throve on it? I'll not harass myself more about them, thought I at last. I'll describe my brigand as I find him. The fellow who comes to meet me for the money shall be the class. "Ex pede Herculem" shall serve one here, and I have no doubt I shall be as accurate as the others who contribute to this sort of literature.

I arrived at St. Andrea as the Angelus was ringing, and saw that pretty sight of a whole village on their knees at evening prayer, which would have been prettier had not the devotees been impressed with the most rascally countenances I ever beheld.

From St. Andrea to Rocco was a walk of seventeen miles, but I was not sorry to ex-

change the wearisome barroccino I had been jolting in for the last six hours, for my feet, and after a light meal of bread and onions, washed down with a very muddy imitation of vinegar, I set forth with a guide for my destination. There was not much companionship in my conductor, who spoke a patois totally unintelligible to me, and who could only comprehend by signs. His own pantomime, however, conveyed to me that we were approaching the brigand region, and certain significant gestures about his throat and heart intimated to me that sudden death was no unusual casualty in these parts. An occasional rude cross erected on the roadside, or a painted memorial on the face of a rock, would also attest some bygone disaster, at the sight of which he invariably knelt and uttered a prayer, on rising from which he seemed to me each time but half decided whether he would accompany me farther.

At last, after a four hours' hard walk, we gained the crest of a mountain ridge, from which the descent seemed nearly precipitous,

and here my companion showed me by the faint moonlight a small heap of stones, in the midst of which a stake was placed upright; he muttered some words in a very low tone, and held up eight fingers, possibly to convey that eight people had been murdered or buried in that place. Whatever the idea, one thing was certain,—he would go no farther. He pointed to the zigzag path I was to follow, and stretched out his hand to show me, as I supposed, where Rocco lay, and then unslinging from his shoulder the light carpet-bag he had hitherto carried for me, he held out his palm for payment.

I resolutely refused, however, to accept his resignation, and ordered him by a gesture to resume his load and march on, but the fellow shook his head doggedly, and pointed with one finger to the open palm of the other hand. The gesture was defiant and insolent, and as we were man to man, I felt it would be an ignominy to submit to him, so I again showed signs of refusal, and pointed to the bag. At this he drew a long thin-bladed knife from his

garter, but as quickly I pulled out a revolver from my breast-pocket. The fellow's sharp ear caught the click of the lock, and with a spring he darted over the low parapet and disappeared. I never saw him more.

A cold sweat broke over me as I took up my burden and resumed my way. There was but one path, so that I could not hesitate as to the road, but I own that I began that descent with a heart-sinking and a terror that I have no words to convey. That the fellow would spring out upon me at some turn of the way seemed so certain, that at each sharp angle I halted and drew breath for the struggle I thought was coming. My progress was thus much retarded, and my fatigue greatly increased. The day broke at last, but found me still plodding on in a dense pine-wood which clothed the lower sides of the mountain. In addition to my carpet-bag I had the heavy belt in which the gold pieces were secured, and the weight of which became almost insupportable.

What inconceivable folly had ever involved me in such an adventure? How could I have

been so weak as to accept such a mission? Here was I, more than a thousand miles away from home, alone on foot in the midst of a mountain tract, the chosen resort of the worst assassins of Europe, and, as if to insure my ruin, with a large sum in gold on my person. What could my friend have meant by proposing the enterprise to me? Did he imagine the mountain-paths of the Basilicata were like Pall Mall? or did he,—and this seemed more likely,—did he deem that the man who had so little to live for must necessarily care less for life? If I must enter the public service, thought I, at the peril of my neck, better to turn to some other means of living. Then I grew sardonic and malicious, declaring to myself how like a rich man it was to offer such an employment to a poor man, as though, when existence had so little to charm, one could not hold to it with any eagerness. The people, muttered I, who throw these things to us so contemptuously are careful enough of themselves. You never find one of them risk his life, no, nor even peril his health, in any enterprise.

As the sun shone out and lit up a magnificent landscape beneath me, where, in the midst of a wooded plain, a beautiful lake lay stretched out, dotted over with little islands, I grew in better humour with myself and with the world at large. It was certainly very lovely. The snow-peaks of the Abruzzi could be seen here and there topping the clouds, which floated lightly up from the low-lying lands of the valley. Often and often had I walked miles and miles to see a scene not fit to be compared with this. If I had only brought my colours with me, what a bit of landscape I might have carried away ! The pencil could do nothing where so much depended on tint and glow. A thin line of blue smoke rose above the trees near the lake, and this I guessed to proceed from the village of Rocco d'Anco. I plucked up my courage at the sight, and again set forth, weary and foot-sore it is true, but in a cheerier, heartier spirit than before.

Four hours' walking, occasionally halting for a little rest, brought me to Rocco, a village of about twenty houses, straggling up the side

of a vine-clad hill, the crest of which was occupied by a church. The population were all seated at their doors, it being some festa, and were, I am bound to admit, about as ill-favoured a set as one would wish to see. In the aspect of the men, and indeed still more in that of the women, one could at once recognise the place as a brigand resort. There were, in the midst of all the signs of squalor and poverty, rich scarfs and costly shawls to be seen; while some of the very poorest wore gold chains round their necks, and carried handsomely ornamented pistols and daggers at their waist-belts. I may as well mention here, not to let these worthy people be longer under a severe aspersion than needful, that they were not themselves brigands, but simply the friends and partisans of the gangs, who sold them the different spoils of which they had divested the travellers. The village was in fact little else than the receptacle of stolen goods until opportunity offered to sell them elsewhere. I had been directed to put up at a little inn kept by an ex-friar who went by the name of Fra

Bartolo, and I soon found the place a very pleasant contrast, in its neatness and comfort, to the dirt and wretchedness around it. The Frate, too, was a fine, jovial, hearty-looking fellow, with far more the air of a Sussex farmer in his appearance than a Calabrian peasant. He set me at ease at once by saying that of course I came for the fishing, and added that the lake was in prime order and the fish plenty. This was said with such palpable roguery that I saw it was meant for the bystanders, and knew at once he had been prepared for my arrival and expected me. I was, however, more in need of rest and refreshment than of conversation, and after a hearty but hurried meal I turned in and fell off to sleep as I had never slept before. Twice or thrice I had a faint consciousness that attempts were made to awaken me, and once that a candle was held close to my eyes, but these were very confused and indistinct sensations, and my stupor soon conquered them.

“That’s pretty well for a nap. Just nine hours of it,” said the Frate, as he

jogged my shoulder and insisted on arousing me.

"I was so tired," said I, stretching myself, and half turning to the wall for another bout.

"No, no ; you mustn't go to sleep again," said he, bending over me. "He's come," and he made a gesture with his thumb towards an adjoining room. "He's been there above an hour."

"Do you mean——"

"Hush!" he said cautiously. "We name no names here. Get up and see him ; he never likes loitering down in these places. One can't be sure of everybody in this world." And here he threw up his eyes, and seemed for a moment overwhelmed at the thought of human frailty and corruption.

"He is expecting me then?" said I.

"Very impatiently, sir. He wanted to arouse you when he arrived, and he has been twice in here to see if you were really asleep."

Something like a thrill ran through me to think that, as I lay there, this brigand, this man of crimes and bloodshed,—for of course

he was such,—had stood by my bedside, and bent over me. The Frate, however, urging me to activity, left me no time for these reflections, and I arose quickly and followed him. I was eager to know what manner of man it was to whom I was about to make my approach ; but I was hurried along a passage, and half pushed into a room, and the door closed behind me, before I had time for a word.

On a low settle-bed, just in front of me, as I entered, a man lay smoking a short meer-schaum, whose dress and get up, bating some signs of wear and ill-usage, would have made the fortune of a small theatre. His tall hat was wreathed with white roses, from the midst of which a tall feather, spray-like and light, stood up straight. His jacket of bright green, thrown open wide, displayed a scarlet waistcoat perfectly loaded with gold braiding. Leather breeches, ending above the knee, showed the great, massive limb beneath to full advantage ; while the laced stocking that came up to the calf served on one side as belt for a stiletto, whose handle was entirely incrustcd

with precious stones. "You are a good sleeper, Signor Inglese," said he, in a pleasant, richly-toned voice, "and I feel sorry to have disturbed you." This speech was delivered with all the ease and courtesy of a man accustomed to the world. "You may imagine, however, that I cannot well delay in places like this. Rocco, I believe, is very friendly to me, but where there are three hundred people there may easily be three traitors."

I assented, and added that from what Fra Bartolo had told me, neither he nor his had much to fear in those parts.

"I believe so, too," added he, caressing his immense moustache, which came down far below his chin on either side. "We have between us the best bond of all true friendship,—we need each other. You have brought the ransom in gold, I hope?"

"Yes ; in gold of the English mint, too."

"I'd rather have our own. The zecchin has less alloy than your coin, and as what we take generally goes into the crucible, the distinction is of value."

“If I had only known——”

“Never mind. It is too late now to think of it. Let us conclude the matter, for I wish to be away by daybreak.”

I unfastened my waist-belt, and opening a secret spring, poured forth a mass of bright sovereigns on the table.

“I have such perfect reliance in your honour, signor,” said I, “that I make no conditions—I ask no questions. That you will at once release my countryman, I do not doubt for an instant.”

“He is already at liberty,” said he, as he continued to pile the coin in little heaps of ten each. “Every step you took since you arrived at Naples was known to me. I knew the moment you came, the hotel you stopped at, the visit you paid to your minister, the two hours passed in the Bank, your departure in the diligence; and the rascal you engaged for a guide came straight to me after he left you. My police, signor mio, is somewhat better organised than Count Cavour’s,” said he, with a laugh.

The mention of the Count's name reminded me at once to sound him on politics, and see if he, and others like him, in reality interested themselves as partisans on either side.

"Of course," said he, "we liked the old dynasty better than the present people. A splendid court and a brilliant capital attracted strangers from all quarters of Europe. Strangers visited Capri, Amalfi, Pœstum; they went here, and there, and everywhere. And they paid for their pleasures like gentlemen. The officials, too, of those days were men with bowels, who knew every one must live. What have we now? Piedmontese dogs, who are not Italians; who speak no known tongue, and who have no other worship than the house of Savoy."

"Might I venture to ask," said I, obsequiously, "how is it that I find a man of your acquirements and ability in such a position as this?"

"Because I like this life better than that of an 'Impiegato' with five hundred ducats a year! Perhaps I don't follow it all from choice.

Perhaps I have my days of regrets, and such like. But for that, are you yourself so rightly fitted in life—I ask at random—that you feel you are doing the exact thing that suits you? Can you say, as you rise of a morning, ‘I was cut out for this kind of existence—I am exactly where I ought to be?’”

I shook my head in negative, and for some seconds nothing was said on either side.

“The score is all right,” said he, at last. “Do you know”—here he gave a very peculiar smile; indeed, his face, so far as I could see, beneath the shadow of his hat and his bushy beard, actually assumed an expression of intense drollery—“do you know, I begin to think we have made a bad bargain here!”

“How so?” asked I.

“I begin to suspect,” said he, “that our prisoner was worth a much heavier ransom, and that his friends would willingly have paid four times this sum for him.”

“You are entirely mistaken there,” said I. “It is the astonishment of every one that he has been ransomed at all. He is a good-for-

nothing spendthrift fellow, whom most families would be heartily glad to be rid of; and so far from being worth a thousand pounds, I believe nine out of ten parents wouldn't have paid as many shillings for him."

"We all liked him," said he. "We found him pleasant company; and he fell into all our ways like one of ourselves."

"A scamp was sure to do that easier than an honest man," said I, forgetting in my eagerness how rude my speech was.

"Perhaps there is truth in what you say, sir," said he, haughtily. "Communities like ours scarcely invite men of unblemished morals, and therefore I do not ask you to return with me."

He arose as he spoke, and swept the coin into a bag which he wore at his side. Still, thought I, he might tell me something more about these brigands. Are they partisans of the Bourbons, or are they mere highwaymen? Here is a man fully equal to the discussion of such a question. Shall I ask him to decide the matter?

“I see,” said he, laughing, as I propounded my mystery. “You want to make a book about us; but our people don’t understand that sort of curiosity; they distrust, and they occasionally resent it. Stay a week or ten days where you are. Fra Bartolo will feed you better than we should, and cram you with brigand stories better still. You’ll find it far pleasanter, and your readers will think so too. Addio;” and he touched his hat in a half-haughty way, and strolled out. I sat down for an instant to recover myself, when the quick clatter of a horse’s feet aroused me, and he was gone.

There was no doubt of it; he was a very remarkable man; one who, in happier circumstances, might have made a figure in life, and achieved a conspicuous position. Who was he, whence came he? The Frate could tell me all these things. As the robber said, he could cram me admirably. I arranged at once to stay a week there. My week was prolonged to a fortnight, and I was well into the third week ere I shook his great hand and said good-bye.

During all this I wrote, I may say, from morning till night. At one time it was my Blue Book ; at another I took a spell at stories of robber life. I wrote short poems—songs of the brigands I called them. In fact, I dished up my highwayman in a score of ways, and found him good in all. The portmanteau which I had brought out full of gold I now carried back more closely packed with MSS. I hurried to England, only stopping once to call at the Legation, and learn that Mr. St. John had returned to his post, and was then hard at work in the Chancellerie. When I arrived in London my report was ready, but as the ministry had fallen the week before, I was obliged to re-write it every word. Lord Muddlemore had succeeded my patron, Lord Scatterdale, and as he was a strong Tory, the brigands must be Bourbons for him ; and they were so. I had lived amongst them for months, and had eaten of their raw lamb and drunk of their fiery wine, and pledged toasts to the health of Francesco, and “Morte” to everybody else. What splendid fellows I made

them ! Every chief was a La Rochejaquelin, and as for the little bit of robbery they did now and then, it was only to pay for masses for their souls when they were shot by the Bersaglieri. My Blue Book was printed, quoted by the *Times*, cited in the House ; I was called “ the intrepid and intelligent witness ” by Disraeli ; and I was the rage. Dinners fell in showers over me, and invitations to country-houses came by every post. Almost worn out by these flatteries, I was resolving on a course of abstinence, when a most pressing invitation came to a country gathering where Mr. St. John was to be of the party. I had never met him, and, indeed, was rather irritated at the ingratitude he had displayed in never once acknowledging, even by a few lines, the great service I had rendered him. Still I was curious to see a man whose figure occupied so important a place in my life’s tableau.

I went ; but St. John had not arrived ; he was detained by important affairs in town, and feared he should not be able to keep his promise. For myself, perhaps, it was all the

better. I had the whole field my own, and discoursed brigandage without the fear of a contradiction.

A favourite representation with me was my first night at Rocco. I used to give it with considerable success. I described the village and the Frate, and then went on to my first sight of the renowned chief himself; for of course I never hesitated to call in Stoppa, any more than to impart to his conversation a much higher and wider reach than it actually had any claim to.

My "Stoppa" was pronounced admirable. I lounged, smoked, gesticulated, and declaimed him to perfection. I made him something between William Tell and the Corsican brothers, and nervous people wouldn't have seen him, I ween, for worlds.

On the occasion that I speak of, the company was a large one, and I outdid myself in my pains to succeed. I even brought down with me the identical portmanteau, and actually appeared in the veritable hat and coat of the original adventure.

My audience was an excellent one; they laughed where I was droll, and positively shrieked where I became pathetic. I had sent round little water-colours of the scenery, and was now proceeding to describe the inn of the Frate, and my first arrival there.

“I will not affect to declare,” said I, “that it was altogether without some sense of anxiety—I might even say fear—that I approached the room where this man of crime and bloodshed awaited me. Stoppa! a name that brought terror wherever it was uttered, the word that called the soldiers to arms from the bivouac, and silenced the babe as it sobbed on its mother’s breast. I entered the room, however, boldly, and advancing to the bed where he lay, said, in a careless tone, ‘Capitano’—they like the title;—‘capitano, how goes it?’”

Just as I uttered the words a heavy hand fell on my shoulder! I turned, and there, there at my side—stood Stoppa himself, dressed exactly as I saw him at Rocco.

Whether it was the terrible look of the

fellow, or some unknown sense of fear that his presence revived, or whether it was a terror lest my senses were deceiving me, and that a wandering brain alone had conjured up the image, I cannot say; but I fainted, and was carried senseless and unconscious to my room. A doctor was sent for, and said something about "meningitis." "I had overworked my brain, overstrained my faculties, and so forth;" with rest and repose, however, I should get over the attack. I had a sharp attack, but, in about a week, was able to get up again. As all were enjoined to avoid strictly any reference to the topic which it was believed had led to my seizure, and as I myself did not venture to approach it, days passed over with me in a half-dreamy state, my mind continually dwelling on the late incident, and striving to find out some explanation of it.

"Mr. St. John, sir, wishes to pay you a visit," said the servant one morning, as I had just finished my breakfast; and as the man retired St. John entered the room

"I am sorry I gave you such a start the

other evening," he began; but I could not suffer him to proceed; for, clutching him by the arm, I cried out, "For Heaven's sake, don't trifle with a brain so distracted as mine, but tell me at once, are you——"

"Of course I am," said he, laughing. "You don't fancy, do you, that you are the only man with a gift for humbug?"

"And it was to you I paid the ransom?" gasped I out.

"Who had a better right to it, old fellow? Tell me that?" said he, as he drew forth a cigar and lighted it. "You see, the matter was thus; I had lost very heavily at 'Baccarat' at the club; and having already overdrawn my allowance, I was sorely put to. My chief had no great affection for me, and had intimated to the banker that, if I wanted an advance, it would be as well to refuse me. In a word, I found every earth stopped, and was driven to my wits' end. I thought I'd turn brigand,—indeed, if the occasion had offered, perhaps I should,—and then I thought I'd get myself captured by the brigands. No man

could complain of a fellow being a defaulter if he had been carried off by robbers. With this intention I set out for Rocco, which had got the reputation of being a spot in favour with these gentry ; but to my surprise, on arriving there, I discovered Rocco was out of fashion. No brigand had patronised the place for the last three years or more, and the landlord of the White Fox told me that the village was going fast to decay. The Basilicata, in fact, was no longer 'the mode;' and every brigand, who had any sense of dignity, had betaken himself to the mountains below Atri. Fra Bartolo's account of Stoppa was not so encouraging that I cared to follow him there. He had taken a fancy of late for sending the noses as well as the ears of the captives to their friends at Naples, and I shrank from contributing my share to this interesting collection ; and it was then it occurred to me to pretend I had been captured, and arrange the terms of my own ransom. Fra Bartolo helped me throughout—provided my costume, wrote my letters, and, in a word, conducted the whole negotiation like

one thoroughly acquainted with all the details. I intended to have confided everything to you so soon as I secured the money, but I saw you so bent on being the hero of a great adventure, and so full of that blessed Blue Book you had come to write, that I felt it would be a sin to disenchant you. There's the whole story ; and if you only keep my secret, I'll keep yours. I'm off this week to Rio as second Secretary, so that, at all events, wait till I sail."

"You may trust my prudence for a longer term than that," said I.

"I rather suspect so," said he, laughing. "They say that your clever report on brigandage is to get you a good berth, and I don't think you'll spoil your advancement by an indiscreet disclosure."

We parted with a hearty shake hands, and I never met him till ten years after. How that meeting came about, and why I now reveal this incident, I may relate at another time.

CONFESSION THE SECOND. AS TO LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

“ IN DOUBT.”

THE door into the ante-room where I was waiting stood half-open, and I heard a very imperious voice say, “Tell Mr. Gosslett it is impossible,—quite impossible! There are above three hundred applicants, and I believe he is about the least suitable amongst them.” A meek-looking young gentleman came out after this; and, closing the door cautiously, said, “My lord regrets extremely, Mr. Gosslett, that you should have been so late in forwarding your testimonials. He has already filled the place, but if another vacancy occurs, his lordship will bear your claims in mind.”

I bowed in silent indignation, and withdrew. How I wished there had been any great meeting,—any popular gathering,—near me at that moment, that I might go down and denounce, with all the force of a wounded and insulted spirit, the insolence of office and the tyranny of the place-holder! With what withering sarcasm I would have flayed those parasites of certain great houses who, without deserts of their own, regard every office under the Crown as their just prerogative! Who was Henry Lord Scatterdale that he should speak thus of Paul Gosslett? What evidences of ability had he given to the world? What illustrious proofs of high capacity as a minister, that he should insult one of those who, by the declared avowal of his party, are the bone and sinew of England? Let Beales only call another meeting, and shall I not be there to expose these men to the scorn and indignation of the country? Down with the whole rotten edifice of pampered menials and corrupt placemen,—down with families patented to live on the nation,—down with a system which per-

petuates the worst intrigues that ever disgraced and demoralised a people,—a system worse than the corrupt rule of the Bourbons of Naples, and more degrading than——

“Now, stoopid!” cried a cabman, as one of his shafts struck me on the shoulder, and sent me spinning into an apple-stall.

I recovered my legs, and turned homewards to my lodgings in a somewhat more subdued spirit.

“Please, sir,” said a dirty maid-of-all-work, entering my room after me, “Mrs. Mechim says the apartment is let to another gentleman after Monday, and please begs you have to pay one pound fourteen and threepence, sir.”

“I know, I know,” said I, impatiently.

“Yes, sir,” replied the smutty face, still standing in the same place.

“Well, I have told you I know all that. You have got your answer, haven’t you?”

“Please yes, sir, but not the money.”

“Leave the room,” said I, haughtily; and my grand imperious air had its success; for I believe she suspected I was a little deranged.

I locked the door to be alone with my own thoughts, and opening my writing-desk, I spread before me four sovereigns and some silver. "Barely my funeral expenses," said I, bitterly. I leaned my head on my hand, and fell into a mood of sad thought. I wasn't a bit of a poet. I couldn't have made three lines of verse had you given me a million for it; but somehow I bethought me of Chatterton in his garret, and said to myself, "Like him, poor Gosslett sunk, famished in the midst of plenty,—a man in all the vigour of youth, able, active, and energetic, with a mind richly gifted, and a heart tender as a woman's." I couldn't go on. I blubbered out into a fit of crying that nearly choked me.

"Please, sir," said the maid, tapping at the door, "the gentleman in the next room begs you not to laugh so loud."

"Laugh!" burst I out. "Tell him, woman, to take care and be present at the inquest. His evidence will be invaluable." As I spoke I threw myself on my bed, and fell soon after into a sound sleep.

When I woke it was night. The lamps were lighted in the street, and a small, thin rain was falling, blurring the gas flame, and making everything look indistinct and dreary. I sat at the window and looked out, I know not how long. The world was crape-covered to me; not a thought of it that was not dark and dismal. I tried to take a retrospect of my life, and see where and how I might have done better; but all I could collect was, that I had met nothing but ingratitude and injustice, while others, with but a tithe of my capacity, had risen to wealth and honour. I, fated to evil from my birth, fought my long fight with fortune, and sank at last, exhausted. "I wonder will any one ever say, 'Poor Gosslett?'" I wonder will there be,—even late though it be,—one voice to declare, 'That was no common man! Gosslett, in any country but our own, would have been distinguished and honoured. To great powers of judgment he united a fancy rich, varied, and picturesque; his temperament was poetic, but his reasoning faculties asserted the mastery over his imagina-

tion?' Will they be acute enough to read me thus? Will they know,—in one word,—will they know the man they have suffered to perish in the midst of them?" My one gleam of comfort was the unavailing regret I should leave to a world that had neglected me. "Yes," said I bitterly, "weep on, and cease not."

I made a collection of all my papers,—some of them very curious indeed,—stray fragments of my life,—brief jottings of my opinions on the current topics of the day. I sealed these carefully up, and began to bethink me whom I should appoint my literary executor. I had not the honour of his acquaintance, but how I wished I had known Martin Tupper! There were traits in that man's writings that seemed to vibrate in the closer chambers of my heart. While others gave you words and phrases, he gave you the outgoings of a warm nature,—the overflowings of an affectionate heart. I canvassed long with myself whether a stranger might dare to address him, and prefer such a request as mine; but I could not summon courage to take the daring step.

After all, thought I, a man's relatives are his natural heirs. My mother's sister had married a Mr. Morse, who had retired from business, and settled down in a cottage near Rochester. He had been "in rags,"—I mean the business of that name,—for forty years, and made a snug thing of it; but, by an unlucky speculation, had lost more than half of his savings. Being childless, and utterly devoid of affection for any one, he had purchased an annuity on the joint lives of his wife and himself, and retired to pass his days near his native town.

I never liked him, nor did he like me. He was a hard, stern, coarse-natured man, who thought that any one who had ever failed in anything was a creature to be despised, and saw nothing in want of success but an innate desire to live in indolence, and be supported by others. He often asked me why I didn't turn coal-heaver? He said he would have been a coal-heaver rather than be dependent upon his relations.

My aunt might originally have been some-

what softer-natured, but time and association had made her very much like my uncle. Need I say that I saw little of them, and never, under any circumstances, wrote a line to either of them?

I determined I would go down and see them, and not waiting for morning nor the rail, that I would go on foot. It was raining torrents by this time, but what did I care for that? When the ship was drifting on the rocks, what mattered a leak more or less?

It was dark night when I set out; and when day broke, dim and dreary, I was soaked thoroughly through, and not more than one-fifth of the way. There was, however, that in the exercise, and in the spirit it called forth, to rally me out of my depression, and I plodded along through mud and mire, breasting the swooping rain in a far cheerier frame than I could have thought possible. It was closing into darkness as I reached the little inn where the cottage stood, and I was by this time fairly beat between fatigue and hunger.

“Here’s a go!” cried my uncle, who opened

the door for me. "Here's Paul Gosslett, just as we're going to dinner."

"The very time to suit him," said I, trying to be jocular.

"Yes, lad, but will it suit us? We've only an Irish stew, and not too much of it, either."

"How are you, Paul?" said my aunt, offering her hand. "You seem wet through. Won't you dry your coat?"

"Oh, it's no matter," said I. "I never mind wet."

"Of course he doesn't," said my uncle. "What would he do if he was up at the 'diggings'? What would he do if he had to pick rags as I have, ten, twelve hours at a stretch, under heavier rain than this?"

"Just so, sir," said I, concurring with all he said.

"And what brought you down, lad?" asked he.

"I think, sir, it was to see you and my aunt. I haven't been very well of late, and I fancied a day in the country might rally me."

“Stealing a holiday,—the old story,” muttered he. “Are you doing anything now?”

“No, sir. I have unfortunately nothing to do.”

“Why not go on the quay then, and turn coalheaver? I’d not eat bread of another man’s earning when I could carry a sack of coals. Do you understand that?”

“Perhaps I do, sir; but I’m scarcely strong enough to be a coal-porter.”

“Sell matches then,—lucifer matches!” cried he, with a bang of his hand on the table, “or be a poster.”

“Oh, Tom!” cried my aunt, who saw that I had grown first red, and then sickly pale all over.

“As good men as he have done both. But here’s the dinner, and I suppose you must have your share of it.”

I was in no mood to resent this invitation, discourteous as it was, for I was in no mood to resent anything. I was crushed and humbled to a degree that I began to regard my abject condition as a martyr might his martyrdom.

The meal went over somewhat silently ; little was spoken on any side. A half-jocular remark on the goodness of my appetite was the only approach to a pleasantry. My uncle drank something which by the colour I judged to be port, but he neither offered it to my aunt nor myself. She took water, and I drank largely of beer, which once more elicited a compliment to me on my powers of suction.

“Better have you for a week than a fortnight, lad,” said my uncle, as we drew round the fire after dinner.

My aunt now armed herself with some knitting apparatus, while my uncle, flanked by a smoking glass of toddy on one side and the “Tizer” on the other, proceeded to fill his pipe with strong tobacco, puffing out at intervals short and pithy apothegms about youth being the season for work and age for repose,—under the influence of whose drowsy wisdom, and overcome by the hot fire, I fell off fast asleep. For a while I was so completely lost in slumber that I heard nothing around. At last I began to dream of my long journey,

and the little towns I had passed through, and the places I fain would have stopped at to bait and rest, but nobly resisted, never breaking bread nor tasting water till I had reached my journey's end. At length I fancied I heard people calling me by my name, some saying words of warning or caution, and others jeering and bantering me; and then quite distinctly,—as clearly as though the words were in my ear,—I heard my aunt say—

“I'm sure Lizzy would take him. She was shamefully treated by that heartless fellow, but she's getting over it now; and if any one, even Paul there, offered, I'm certain she'd not refuse him.”

“She has a thousand pounds,” grunted out my uncle.

“Fourteen hundred in the bank; and as they have no other child, they must leave her everything they have, when they die.”

“It won't be much. Old Dan has little more than his vicarage, and he always ends each year a shade deeper in debt than the one before it.”

“Well, she has her own fortune, and nobody can touch that.”

I roused myself, yawned aloud, and opened my eyes.

“Pretty nigh as good a hand at sleeping as eating,” said my uncle, gruffly.

“It’s a smart bit of a walk from Duke Street, Piccadilly,” said I, with more vigour than I had yet assumed.

“Why, a fellow of your age ought to do that twice a week just to keep him in wind.”

“I say, Paul,” said my aunt, “were you ever in Ireland?”

“Never, aunt. Why do you ask me?”

“Because you said a little while back that you felt rather poorly of late,—low and weakly.”

“No loss of appetite, though,” chuckled in my uncle.

“And we were thinking,” resumed she, “of sending you over to stay a few weeks with an old friend of ours in Donegal. He calls it the finest air in Europe; and I know he’d treat you with every kindness.”

“Do you shoot?” asked my uncle.

“No, sir.”

“Nor fish?”

“No, sir.”

“What are you as a sportsman? Can you ride? Can you do anything?”

“Nothing whatever, sir. I once carried a game-bag, and that was all.”

“And you’re not a farmer nor a judge of cattle. How are you to pass your time, I’d like to know?”

“If there were books, or if there were people to talk to——”

“Mrs. Dudgeon’s deaf,—she’s been deaf these twenty years; but she has a daughter. Is Lizzy deaf?”

“Of course she’s not,” rejoined my aunt, tartly.

“Well, she’d talk to you; and Dan would talk. Not much, I believe, though; he an’t a great fellow for talk.”

“They’re something silent all of them, but Lizzy is a nice girl, and very pretty,—at least she was when I saw her here two years ago.”

“At all events, they are distant connections of your mother’s; and as you are determined to live on your relations, I think you ought to give them a turn.”

“There is some justice in that, sir,” said I, determined now to resent no rudeness, nor show offence at any coarseness, however great it might be.

“Well, then, I’ll write to-morrow, and say you’ll follow my letter, and be with them soon after they receive it. I believe it’s a lonely sort of place enough,—Dan calls it next door to Greenland; but there’s good air, and plenty of it.”

We talked for some time longer over the family whose guest I was to be, and I went off to bed, determined to see out this new act of my life’s drama before I whistled for the curtain to drop.

It gave a great additional interest besides to my journey to have overheard the hint my aunt threw out about a marriage. It was something more than a mere journey for change of air. It might be a journey to change the

whole character and fortune of my life. And was it not thus one's fate ever turned? You went somewhere by a mere accident, or you stopped at home. You held a hand to help a lady into a boat, or you assisted her off her horse, or you took her in to dinner; and out of something insignificant and trivial as this your whole life's destiny was altered. And not alone your destiny, but your very nature; your temper, as fashioned by another's temper; your tastes, as moulded by other's tastes; and your morality, your actual identity, was the sport of a casualty too small and too poor to be called an incident.

“Is this about to be the turning-point in my life?” asked I of myself. “Is Fortune at last disposed to bestow a smile upon me? Is it out of the very depth of my despair I'm to catch sight of the first gleam of light that has fallen upon my luckless career?”

CHAPTER II.

THE REV. DAN DUDGEON.

My plan of procedure was to be this. I was supposed to be making a tour in Ireland, when, hearing of certain connections of my mother's family living in Donegal, I at once wrote to my Uncle Morse for an introduction to them, and he not only provided me with a letter accrediting me, but wrote by the same post to the Dudgeons to say I was sure to pay them a visit.

On arriving in Dublin I was astonished to find so much that seemed unlike what I had left behind me. That intense preoccupation, that anxious eager look of business so remarkable in Liverpool, was not to be found here. If the people really were busy, they went about their affairs in a half-lounging, half-jocular humour, as though they would'nt be selling hides, or shipping pigs, or landing sugar hogs-

heads, if they had anything else to do;—as if trade was a dirty necessity, and the only thing was to get through with it with as little interruption as possible to the pleasanter occupations of life.

Such was the aspect of things on the quays. The same look pervaded the Exchange, and the same air of little to do, and of deeming it a joke while doing it, abounded in the law courts, where the bench exchanged witty passages with the bar; and the prisoners, the witnesses, and the jury fired smart things at each other with a seeming geniality and enjoyment that were very remarkable. I was so much amused by all I saw, that I would willingly have delayed some days in the capital; but my uncle had charged me to present myself at the vicarage without any unnecessary delay, so I determined to set out at once.

I was not, I shame to own, much better up in the geography of Ireland than in that of Central Africa, and had but a very vague idea whither I was going.

“Do you know Donégál?” asked I of the

waiter, giving to my pronunciation of the word a long second and a short third syllable.

“No, your honour, never heard of him,” was the answer.

“But it’s a place I’m asking for,—a county,” said I, with some impatience.

“Faix, may be it is,” said he, “but it’s new to me all the same.”

“He means Donegāl,” said a red-whiskered man with a bronzed, weather-beaten face, and a stern, defiant air, that invited no acquaintance-ship.

“Oh, Donegāl,” chimed in the waiter. “Begorra! it wouldn’t be easy to know it by the name your honour gav’ it.”

“Are you looking for any particular place in that county?” asked the stranger in a tone sharp and imperious as his former speech.

“Yes,” said I, assuming a degree of courtesy that I thought would be the best rebuke to his bluntness; “but I’ll scarcely trust myself with the pronunciation after my late failure. This is the place I want;” and I drew forth my uncle’s letter and showed the address.

“Oh, that’s it, is it?” cried he, reading aloud. “‘The Reverend Daniel Dudgeon, Killyrotherum, Donegal.’ And are you going there? Oh, I see you are,” said he, turning his eyes to the foot of the address. “‘Favoured by Paul Gosslett, Esq.;’ and you are Paul Gosslett.”

“Yes, sir, with your kind permission, I am Paul Gosslett,” said I, with what I hoped was a chilling dignity of manner.

“If it’s only my permission you want, you may be anything you please,” said he, turning his insolent stare full on me.

I endeavoured not to show any sensitiveness to this impertinence, and went on with my dinner, the stranger’s table being quite close to mine.

“It’s your first appearance in Ireland, I suspect,” said he, scanning me as he picked his teeth, and sat carelessly with one leg crossed over the other.

I bowed a silent acquiescence, and he went on. “I declare that I believe a Cockney, though he hasn’t a word of French, is more at

home on the Continent than in Ireland." He paused for some expression of opinion on my part, but I gave none. I filled my glass, and affected to admire the colour of the wine, and sipped it slowly, like one thoroughly engaged in his own enjoyments.

"Don't you agree with me?" asked he, fiercely.

"Sir, I have not given your proposition such consideration as would entitle me to say I concur with it or not."

"That's not it at all!" broke he in, with an insolent laugh; "but you won't allow that you're a Cockney."

"I protest, sir," said I, sternly, "I have yet to learn that I'm bound to make a declaration of my birth, parentage, and education to the first stranger I sit beside in a coffee-room."

"No, you're not;—nothing of the kind;—for it's done for you. It's done in spite of you, when you open your mouth. Didn't you see the waiter running out of the room with the napkin in his mouth when you tried to say Donegal? Look here, Paul," said he, drawing

his chair confidentially towards my table. "We don't care a rush what you do with your H's, or your W's either ; but, if we can help it, we won't have our national names miscalled. We have a pride in them, and we'll not suffer them to be mutilated or disfigured. Do you understand me now ?"

"Sufficiently, sir, to wish you a very good night," said I, rising from the table, and leaving my pint of sherry, of which I had only drunk one glass.

As I closed the coffee-room door, I thought,—indeed, I'm certain,—I heard a loud roar of laughter.

"Who is that most agreeable gentleman I sat next at dinner ?" asked I of the waiter.

"Counsellor MacNamara, sir. Isn't he a nice man ?"

"A charming person," said I.

"I wish you heard him in the coort, sir. By my conscience, a witness has a poor time under him ! He'd humbug you if you was an archbishop."

"Call me at five," said I, passing up the stairs,

and impatient to gain my room and be alone with my indignation.

I passed a restless, feverish night, canvassing with myself whether I would not turn back and leave for ever a country whose first aspect was so forbidding and unpromising. What stories had I not heard of Irish courtesy to strangers, —Irish wit and Irish pleasantry ! Was this, then, a specimen of that captivating manner which makes these people the French of Great Britain ? Why, this fellow was an unmitigated savage !

Having registered a vow not to open my lips to a stranger till I reached the end of my journey, and to affect deafness rather than be led into conversation, I set off the next day, by train, for Derry. True to my resolve, I only uttered the word “beer” till I arrived in the evening. The next day I took the steamer to a small village called Cushnagorra, from whence it was only ten miles by a good mountain-road to Killyrotherum bay. I engaged a car to take me on, and at last found myself able to ask a few questions without the penalty of being

cross-examined by an impertinent barrister, and being made the jest of a coffee-room.

I wanted to learn something about the people to whose house I was going, and asked Pat accordingly if he knew Mr. Dudgcon.

“Troth I do, sir, well,” said he.

“He’s a good kind of man, I’m told,” said I.

“He is indeed, sir ; no betther.”

“Kind to the poor, and charitable ? ”

“Thrue for you ; that’s himself.”

“And his family is well liked down here ? ”

“I’ll be bound they are. There’s few like them to the fore.”

Rather worried by the persistent assent he gave me, and seeing that I had no chance of deriving anything like an independent opinion from my courteous companion, I determined to try another line. After smoking a cigar and giving one to my friend, who seemed to relish it vastly, I said, as if incidentally, “Where I got that cigar, Paddy, the people are better off than here.”

“And where’s that, sir ? ”

“In America, in the State of Virginia.”

“That’s as thrue as the Bible. It’s elegant times they have there.”

“And one reason is,” said I, “every man can do what he likes with his own. You have a bit of land here, and you daren’t plant tobacco; or if you sow oats or barley, you mustn’t malt it. The law says: ‘You may do this, and you shan’t do that;’ and is that freedom, I ask, or is it slavery?”

“Slavery,—devil a less,” said he, with a cut of his whip that made the horse plunge into the air.

“And do you know why that’s done? Do you know the secret of it all?”

“Sorra a bit o’ me.”

“I’ll tell you, then. It’s to keep up the Church; it’s to feed the parsons that don’t belong to the people;—that’s what they put the taxes on tobacco and whiskey for. What, I’d like to know, do you and I want with that place there with the steeple? What does the Rev. Daniel Dudgeon do for you or me? Grind us,—squeeze us,—maybe, come down on us

when we're trying to scrape a few shillings together, and carry it off for tithes."

"Shure and he's a hard man! He's taking the herrins out of the net this year,—for every ten herrins he takes one."

"And do they bear that?"

"Well, they do," said he, mournfully; "they've no spirit down here; but over at Muggle-na-garry they put slugs in one last winter."

"One what?"

"A parson, your honour; and it did him a dale o' good. He's as meek as a child now about his dues, and they've no trouble with him in life."

"They'll do that with Dudgeon yet, maybe?" asked I.

"With the Lord's blessing, sir," said he, piously.

Satisfied now that it was not a very hopeful task to obtain much information about Ireland from such a source, I drew my hat over my eyes and affected to doze for the remainder of the journey.

We arrived at length at the foot of a narrow road impassable by the car, and here the driver told me I must descend and make the rest of my way on foot.

“The house wasn’t far,” he said; “only over the top of the hill in front of me,—about half-a-quarter of a mile away.”

Depositing my portmanteau under a clump of furze, I set out, drearily enough I will own. The scene around me for miles was one of arid desolation. It was not that no trace of human habitation, nor of any living creature, was to be seen, but that the stony, shingly soil, totally destitute of all vegetation, seemed to deny life to anything. The surface rose and fell in a monotonous undulation, like a great sea suddenly petrified, while here and there some greater boulders represented those mighty waves which, in the ocean, seem to assert supremacy over their fellows.

At last I gained the crest of the ridge, and could see the Atlantic, which indented the shore beneath into many a little bay and inlet; but it was some time ere I could distinguish a

house which stood in a narrow cleft of the mountain, and whose roof, kept down by means of stones and rocks, had at first appeared to me as a part of the surface of the soil. The strong wind almost carried me off my legs on this exposed ridge, so, crouching down, I began my descent, and after half-an-hour's creeping and stumbling, I reached a little enclosed place, where stood the house. It was a long, one-storied building, with cow-house and farm-offices under the same roof. •The hall-door had been evidently long in disuse, since it was battened over with strong planks, and secured besides against the north-west wind by a rough group of rocks. Seeing entrance to be denied on this side, I made for the rear of the house, where a woman beating flax under a shed at once addressed me civilly, and ushered me into the house.

“His riv'rence is in there,” said she, pointing to a door, and leaving me to announce myself. I knocked, and entered. It was a small room, with an antiquated fireplace, at which the parson and his wife and daughter

were seated,—he reading a very much-crumpled newspaper, and they knitting.

“Oh, this is Mr. Gosslett. How are you, sir?” asked Mr. Dudgeon, seizing and shaking my hand; while his wife said, “We were just saying we’d send down to look after you. My daughter Lizzie, Mr. Gosslett.”

Lizzy smiled faintly, but did not speak. I saw, however, that she was a pretty, fair-haired girl, with delicate features and a very gentle expression.

“It’s a wild bit of landscape here, Mr. Gosslett, but of a fine day, with the sun on it and the wind not so strong, it’s handsome enough.”

“It’s grand,” said I, rather hesitating to find the epithet I wanted.

Mrs. D. sighed, and I thought her daughter echoed it, but as his reverence now bustled away to send some one to fetch my trunk, I took my place at the fire, and tried to make myself at home.

A very brief conversation enabled me to learn that Mr. Dudgeon came to the parish on

his marriage, about four-and-twenty years before, and neither he nor his wife had ever left it since. They had no neighbours, and only six parishioners of their own persuasion. The church was about a mile off, and not easily approached in bad weather. It seemed, too, that the bishop and Mr. D. were always at war. The diocesan was a Whig, and the parson a violent Orangeman, who loved loyal anniversaries, demonstrations, and processions, the latter of which came twice or thrice a year from Derry to visit him, and stir up any amount of bitterness and party strife; and though the Rev. Dan, as he was familiarly called, was obliged to pass the long interval between these triumphant exhibitions exposed to the insolence and outrage of the large masses he had offended, he never blinked the peril, but actually dared it; wearing his bit of orange ribbon in his button-hole as he went down the village, and meeting Father Lafferty's scowl with a look of defiance and insult fierce as his own.

After years of episcopal censure and reproof,

administered without the slightest amendment,—for Dan never appeared at a visitation, and none were hardy enough to follow him into his fastness,—he was suffered to do what he pleased, and actually abandoned as one of those hopeless cases which time alone can clear off and remedy. An incident, however, which had befallen about a couple of years back, had almost released the bishop from his difficulty.

In an affray, following on a twelfth of July demonstration, a man had been shot, and though the Rev. Dan was not in any degree implicated in the act, some imprudent allusion to the event in his Sunday's discourse got abroad in the press, and was so severely commented on by a young barrister on the trial, that an inhibition was issued against him, and his church closed for three months.

I have been thus far prolix in sketching the history of those with whom I was now to be domesticated, because once placed before the reader, my daily life is easily understood. We sat over the fire nearly all day, abusing the Papists, and wondering if England would ever

produce one man who could understand the fact that unless you banished the priests and threw down the chapels there was no use in making laws for Ireland.

Then we dined, usually on fish and a bit of bacon, after which we drank the glorious, pious, and immortal memory, with the brass money, the wooden shoes, and the rest of it,—the mild Lizzy herself being “told off” to recite the toast, as her father had a sore throat and couldn’t utter; and the fair, gentle lips, that seldom parted save to smile, delivered the damnatory clause against all who wouldn’t drink that toast, and sentenced them to be “rammed, jammed, and crammed,” as the act declares, in a way that actually amazed me.

If the peasant who drove me over to Killyrotherum did not add much to my knowledge of Ireland by the accuracy of his facts or the fixity of his opinions, the Rev. Dan assuredly made amends for all these shortcomings; for he saw the whole thing at a glance, and knew why Ireland was ungovernable, and how she could be made prosperous and happy, just as

he knew how much poteen went to a tumbler of punch ; and though occasionally despondent when the evening began, as it grew towards bedtime and the decanter waxed low, he had usually arrived at a glorious millennium, when every one wore an orange lily, and the whole world was employed in singing " Croppies lie down."

CHAPTER III.

THE RUN AWAY.

I SUPPOSE I must be a very routine sort of creature, who loves to get into a groove and never leave it. Indeed, I recognise this feature of my disposition in the pleasure I feel in being left to myself, and my own humdrum way of diverting my time. At all events, I grew to like my life at Killyrotherum. The monotony that would have driven most men to despair was to me soothing and grateful.

A breezy walk with Lizzy down to the vil-

lage after breakfast, where she made whatever purchases the cares of household demanded, sufficed for exercise. After that I wrote a little in my own room,—short, jotting notes, that might serve to recall, on some future day, the scarcely tinted surface of my quiet existence, and occasionally putting down such points as puzzled me,—problems whose solution I must try to arrive at with time and opportunity. Perhaps a brief glance at the pages of this diary, as I open it at random, may serve to show how time went over with me.

Here is an entry. [Friday, 17th November. —Mem., to find out from D. D. the exact explanation of his words last night, and which possibly fatigue may have made obscure to me. Is it Sir Wm. Vernon or the Pope who is Antichrist?

Query: also, would not brass money be better than no halfpence? and are not wooden shoes as good as bare feet?

Why does the parish clerk always bring up a chicken when he comes with a message?

Lizzy did not own she made the beefsteak

dumpling, but the maid seemed to let the secret out by bringing in a little amethyst ring she had forgotten on the kitchen table. I wish she knew that I'd be glad she could make dumplings. I am fond of dumplings. To try and tell her this.

Mrs. D. suspects Lizzy is attached to me. I don't think she approves of it. D. D. would not object if I became an Orangeman. Query, what effect would that have on my future career? Could I be an Orangeman without being able to sing the "Boyne Water?" for I never could hum a tune in my life. To inquire about this.

Who was the man who behaved badly to Lizzy? And how did he behave badly? This is a very vital point, though not easy to come at.

18th.—Lizzy likes, I may say loves me. The avowal was made this morning, when I was carrying up two pounds of sugar and one of soap from the village. She said, "Oh, Mr. Gosslett, if you knew how unhappy I am!"

And I laid down the parcel, and taking her hand in mine, said, "Darling, tell me all!" and she grew very red and flurried, and said, "Nonsense, don't be a fool! Take care Tobias don't run away with the soap. I wanted to confide in you; to trust you. I don't want to——" And there she fell a-crying, and sobbed all the way home, though I tried to console her as well as the basket would permit me. Mem.—Not to be led into any tendernesses till the marketing is brought home. Wonder does Lizzy require me to fight the man who behaved badly? What on earth was it he did?

A great discovery coming home from church to-day. D. D. asked me if I had detected anything in his sermon of that morning which I could possibly call violent, illiberal, or uncharitable. As I had not listened to it I was the better able to declare that there was not a word of it I could object to. "Would you believe it, Gosslett," said he,—and he never had called me Gosslett before,—"that was the very sermon they arraigned me for in the Queen's

Bench ; and that mild passage about the Virgin Mary, you'd imagine it was murder I was instilling. You heard it to-day, and know if it's not true. Well, sir," continued he, after a pause, "Tom MacNamara blaguarded me for twenty minutes on it before the whole court, screeching out, 'This is your parson ! this is your instructor of the poor man ! your Christian guide ! your comforter ! These are the teachings that are to wean the nation from bloodshed, and make men obedient to the law and grateful for its protection !' Why do you think he did this ? Because I wouldn't give him my daughter,—a Papist rascal as he is ! That's the whole of it. I published my sermon and sent it to the bishop, and he inhibited me ! It was clear enough what he meant ; he wanted to be made archbishop, and he knew what would please the Whigs. 'My lord,' said I, 'these are the principles that placed the Queen on the throne of this realm. If it wasn't to crush Popery he came, King William crossed the Boyne for nothing.' "

He went on thus till we reached home ; but

I had such a headache from his loud utterance, that I had to lie down and sleep it off.

Monday, 31st.—A letter from Aunt Morse. Very dry and cold. Asks if I have sufficiently recovered from my late attack to be able to resume habits of activity and industry? Why, she knows well enough I have nothing to engage my activity and industry, for I will not be a coalheaver, let uncle say what he likes. Aunt surmises that possibly some tender sentiment may be at the bottom of my attachment to Ireland, and sternly recalls me to the fact that I am not the possessor of landed property and an ancient family mansion in a good county. What can she mean by these warnings? Was it not herself that I overheard asking my uncle, “Would not he do for Lizzy?” How false women are! I wish I could probe that secret about the man that behaved ill: there are so many ways to behave ill, and to be behaved ill by. Shall I put a bold face on it, and ask Lizzy?

Great news has the post brought. Sir Morris Stamer is going out Lord High Commissioner

to the Ionian Islands, and offers to take me as private sec.

It is a brilliant position, and one to marry on. I shall ask Lizzy to-day.

Wednesday, all settled ;—but what have I not gone through these last three days ! She loves me to distraction ; but she'll tell nothing, —nothing till we're married. She says, and with truth, "confidence is the nurse of love." I wish she wasn't so coy. I have not even kissed her hand. She says Irish girls are all coy.

We are to run away, and be married at a place called Articlane. I don't know why we run away ; but this is another secret I'm to hear later on. Quiet and demure as she looks, Lizzy has a very decided disposition. She overbears all opposition, and has a peremptory way of saying, "Don't be a fool, G. !" —she won't call me Paul, only G.,—"and just do as I bade you." I hope she'll explain why this is so,—after our marriage.

I'm getting terribly afraid of the step we're about to take. I feel quite sure it was the Rev.

Dan who shot the Papist on that anniversary affair; and I know he'd shoot me if he thought I had wronged him. Is there any way out of this embarrassment?

What a headache I have! We have been singing Orange songs for four hours. I think I hear that odious shake on the word "ba-a-ttle," as it rhymes to "rat—tle," in old Dan's song. It goes through my brain still; and to-morrow at daybreak we're to run away! Lizzy's bundle is here, in my room; and Tom Ryan's boat is all ready under the rocks, and we're to cross the bay. It sounds very rash when one comes to think of it. I'm sure my Aunt Morse will never forgive it. But Lizzy, all so gentle and docile as she seems, has a very peremptory way with her; and as she promises to give me explanations for everything later on, I have agreed to all. How it blows! There has not been so bad a night since I came here. If it should be rough to-morrow morning, will she still insist on going? I'm a poor sort of sailor at the best of times; but if there's a sea on, I shall be sick as a dog! And

what a situation,—a sea-sick bridegroom running off with his bride ! That was a crash ! I thought the old house was going clean away. The ploughs and harrows they've put on the roof to keep the slates down perform very wild antics in a storm.

I suppose this is the worst climate in Europe. D. D. said yesterday that the length of the day made the only difference between summer and winter ; and, oh dear ! what an advantage does this confer on winter !

Now to bed,—though I'm afraid not to sleep ;—amid such a racket and turmoil, rest is out of the question. Who knows when, where, and how I shall make the next entry in this book ? But, as Mr. Dudgeon says when he finishes his tumbler, "Such is life ! such is life !"

I wonder will Lizzy insist on going on if the weather continues like this ? I'm sure no boatman with a wife and family could be fairly asked to go out in such a storm. I do not think I would have the right to induce a poor man to peril his life, and the support of those

who depend upon him, for my own,—what shall I call it?—my own gratification,—that might be for a picnic;—my own,—no, not happiness, because that is a term of time and continuity;—my own——There goes a chimney, as sure as fate! How they sleep here through everything! There's that fellow who minds the cows snoring through it all in the loft overhead; and he might, for all he knew, have been squashed under that fall of masonry. Was that a tap at the door? I thought I heard it twice.

Yes, it was Lizzy. She had not been to bed. She went out as far as the church rock to see the sea. She says it was grander than she could describe. There is a faint moon, and the clouds are scudding along, as though racing against the waves below; but I refuse to go out and see it all the same. I'll turn in, and try to get some sleep before morning.

I was sound asleep, though the noise of the storm was actually deafening, when Lizzy again tapped at my door, and at last opening it slightly, pushed a lighted candle inside, and

disappeared. If there be a dreary thing in life, it is to get up before day of a dark, raw morning, in a room destitute of all comfort and convenience, and proceed to wash and dress in cold, gloom, and misery, with the consciousness that what you are about to do not only might be safer and better undone, but may, and not at all improbably will, turn out the rashest act of your life.

Over and over I said to myself, "If I were to tell her that I have a foreboding,—a distinct foreboding of calamity;—that I dreamed a dream, and saw myself on a raft, while waves, mountain high, rose above me, and depths yawned beneath,—dark, fathomless, and terrible,—would she mind it? I declare, on my sacred word of honour, I declare I think she'd laugh at me!

"Are you ready?" whispered a soft voice at the door; and I saw at once my doom was pronounced.

Noiselessly, stealthily, we crept down the stairs, and, crossing the little flagged kitchen, undid the heavy bars of the door. Shall I own

that a thought of treason shot through me as I stood with the great bolt in my hands, and the idea flashed across me, "What if I were to let it fall with a crash, and awake the household?" Did she divine what was passing in my head, as she silently took the bar from me, and put it away?

We were now in the open air, breasting a swooping nor'-wester that chilled the very marrow of my bones. She led the way through the dark night as though it were noonday, and I followed, tumbling over stones and rocks and tufts of heather, and falling into holes, and scrambling out again like one drunk. I could hear her laughing at me too;—she who so seldom laughed; and it was with difficulty she could muster gravity enough to say she hoped I had not hurt myself.

We gained the pier at last, and, guided by a lantern held by one of the boatmen, we saw the boat bobbing and tossing some five feet down below. Lizzy sprang in at once, amidst the applauding cheers of the crew, and then several voices cried out, "Now, sir! Now, your

honour!" while two stout fellows pushed me vigorously, as though to throw me into the sea. I struggled and fought manfully, but in vain. I was jerked off my legs, and hurled headlong down, and found myself caught below by some strong arms, though not until I had half sprained my wrist, and barked one of my shins from knee to instep. These sufferings soon gave way to others, as I became sea-sick, and lay at the bottom of the boat, praying we might all go down, and end a misery I could no longer endure. That spars struck me, and ballast rolled over me; that heavy-footed sailors trampled me, and seemed to dance on me, were things I minded not. Great waves broke over the bows, and came in sheets of foam and water over me. What cared I? I had that death-like sickness that makes all life hideous, and I felt I had reached a depth of degradation and misery in which there was only one desire,—that for death. That we succeeded in clearing the point which formed one side of the bay was little short of a miracle, and I remember the cheer the boatmen gave as the danger was

passed, and my last hope of our all going down left me. After this, I know no more.

A wild confusion of voices, a sort of scuffling uproar, a grating sound, and more feet dancing over me, aroused me. I looked up. It was dawn ; a grey murky streak lay towards the horizon, and sheets of rain were carried swiftly on the winds. We were being dragged up on a low shingly shore, and the men,—up to their waists in water,—were carrying the boat along.

As I looked over the gunwale, I saw a huge strong fellow rush down the slope, and breasting the waves as they beat, approach the boat. Lizzy sprang into his arms at once, and he carried her back to land triumphantly. I suppose at any other moment a pang of jealousy might have shot through me. Much sea-sickness, like perfect love, overcometh all things. I felt no more, as I gazed, than if it had been a bundle he had been clasping to his bosom.

They lifted me up, and laid me on the shingle.

“Oh, do, Tom ; he is such a good creature !”

said a voice which, low as it was, I heard distinctly.

"By all that's droll ! this is the Cockney I met at Morrisson's !" cried a loud voice. I looked up ; and there, bending over me, was Counsellor MacNamara, the bland stranger I had fallen in with at Dublin.

"Are you able to get on your legs," asked he, "or shall we have you carried ?"

"No," said I, faintly ; "I'd rather lie here."

"Oh, we can't leave him here, Tom ; it's too cruel."

"I tell you, Lizzy," said he, impatiently, "there's not a minute to lose."

"Let them carry him, then," said she, pleadingly.

I mildly protested my wish to live and die where I lay ; but they carried me up somewhere, and they put me to bed, and they gave me hot drinks, and I fell into, not a sleep, but a trance, that lasted twenty odd hours.

"Faix ! they had a narrow escape of it," were the first intelligible words I heard on awaking. "They were only just married

and drove off when old Dan Dudgeon came up, driving like mad. He was foaming with passion, and said if he went to the gallows for it, he'd shoot the rascal that abused his hospitality and stole his daughter. The lady left this note for your honour."

It went thus:—

"DEAR MR. GOSSLETT,

"You will, I well know, bear me no ill-will for the little fraud I have practised on you. It was an old engagement, broken off by a momentary imprudence on Tom's part; but as I knew he loved me, it was forgiven. My father would not have ever consented to the match, and we were driven to this strait. I entreat you to forgive and believe me

"Most truly yours,

"LIZZY MACNAMARA."

I stole quietly out of Ireland after this, and got over to the Isle of Man, where I learned that my patron had thrown up his Ionian appointment, and I was once again on the world.

CONFESSION THE LAST.

AS TO LAW

I do not exactly know why I sit down to make this my last confession. I can scarcely be a guide to any one. I even doubt if I can be a warning, for when a man is as miserably unlucky as I have proved myself, the natural inference is to regard him as the exception to the ordinary lot of mortals,—a craft fated to founder ere it was launched. It's all very well to deny the existence of such a thing as luck. It sounds splendidly wise in the Latin moralist to say, "*Non numen habes fortuna si sit prudentia,*" which is the old story of putting the salt on the bird's tail over again, since, I say, we can always assume the "*prudentia*" where there is the "*fortuna,*" and in the same way

declare that the unlucky man failed because he was deficient in that same gift of foresight.

Few men knew life so thoroughly in every condition, and under every aspect, as the first Napoleon, and he invariably asked, when inquiring into the fitness of a man for a great command, "Is he lucky?" To my own thinking, it would be as truthful to declare that there was no element of luck in whist, as to say there was no such thing as luck in life. Now, all the "prudentia" in the world will not give a man four by honours; and though a good player may make a better fight with a bad hand than an indifferent performer, there is that amount of badness occasionally dealt out, that no skill can compensate; and do what he may, he must lose the game.

Now, I am by no means about to set up as a model of prudence, industry, or perseverance; as little can I lay claim to anything like natural ability or cleverness. I am essentially commonplace,—one of those men taken "*ex medio acervo*" of humanity, whose best boast

is, that they form the staple of the race, and are the majority in all nations.

There is a very pleasant passage in Lockhart's *Life of Scott*. I cannot lay my hand on it, and may spoil it in the attempt to quote, but the purport is, that one day when Lockhart had used the word "vulgar" in criticising the manners of some people they had been discussing, Sir Walter rebuked him for the mistaken sense he had ascribed to the expression. Vulgar, said he, is only common, and common means general; and what is the general habit and usage of mankind has its base and foundation in a feeling and sentiment that we must not lightly censure. It is, at all events, human.

I wish I could give the text of the passage, for I see how lamentably I have rendered it, but this was the meaning it conveyed to me, and I own I have very often thought over it with comfort and with gratitude.

If the great thinkers,—the men of lofty intellects and high-soaring faculties,—were but to know how, in vindicating the claims

of everyday people to respect and regard, in shielding them from the sneers of smart men, and the quips of witty men, they were doing a great and noble work, for which millions of people like myself would bless them, I am certain we should find many more such kindly utterances as that of the great Sir Walter.

I ask pardon for my digression, so selfish as it is, and return to my narrative.

After that famous "fiasco" I made in Ireland, I,—as the cant phrase has it,—got dark for some time. My temper, which at first sustained me under any amount of banter and ridicule, had begun to give way, and I avoided my relations, who certainly never took any peculiar pains to treat me with delicacy, or had the slightest hesitation in making me a butt for very coarse jokes and very contemptible drollery.

I tried a number of things,—that is, I begun them. I begun to read for the law; I begun a novel; I begun to attend divinity lectures; I got a clerkship in a public office, as supernumerary; I was employed as traveller to a house

in the wooden-clock trade; I was secretary to an Association for the Protection of Domestic Cats, and wrote the prospectus for the "Cats' Home:" but it's no use entering into details. I failed in all, and to such an extent of notoriety had my ill-fortune now attained, that the very mention of my name in connection with a new project would have sentenced it at once to ruin.

Over and over again have I heard my "friends," when whispering together over some new scheme, mutter, "Of course Paul is to have nothing to do with it," "Take care that Paul Gosslett isn't in it," and such-like intimations, that gave me the sensation of being a sort of moral leper, whose mere presence was a calamity. The sense of being deemed universally an unlucky fellow is one of the most depressing things imaginable,—to feel that your presence is accounted an evil agency,—and that your co-operation foreshadows failure,—goes a considerable way towards accomplishing the prediction announced.

Though my uncle's stereotyped recommenda-

tion to become a coalheaver was not exactly to my taste, I had serious thoughts of buying a sack, and, by a little private practice, discovering whether the profession might not in the end become endurable. I was fairly at my wits'-end for a livelihood, and the depression and misery my presence occasioned wherever I went reacted on myself, and almost drove me to desperation.

I was actually so afraid of an evil temptation that I gave up my little lodging that I was so fond of, near Putney, and went to live at Hampstead, where there was no water deep enough to drown a rat. I also forewent shaving, that I might banish my razors, and in all respects set myself steadily to meet the accidents of life with as near an approach to jollity as I could muster.

The simple pleasures of nature,—the enjoyment of the fields and the wild flowers,—the calm contemplation of the rising or setting sun,—the varied forms of insect life,—the many-tinted lichens, the ferns,—the mosses that clothe the banks of shady alleys,—the limpid pools,

starred and broken by the dragon-fly, so full of their own especial charm for the weary voluptuary sick of pampered pleasures and exotic luxuries, do not appeal to the senses of the poor man with that wonderful force of contrast which gives them all their excellence. I have seen an alderman express himself in ecstasies over a roast potato, which certainly would not have called forth the same show of appreciation from an Irish peasant. We like what awakens a new sensation in us ; what withdraws us even in imagination from the routine of our daily lives. There is a great self-esteem gratified when we say, how simple we can be,—how happy in humility,—how easily satisfied, and how little dependent on mere luxury or wealth.

The postman who passed my window every morning had long ceased to be an object of interest or anxiety to me ; for others he brought tidings, good or ill as it might be, but to me, forgotten and ignored of the world, no news ever came ; when one day, to my intense surprise, at first to my perfect incredulity, I saw him draw forth a letter, and make a sign to me

to come down and take it. Yes, there it was, "Paul Gosslett, Esq., The Flaggers, Putney," with "Try Sandpit Cottages, Hampstead," in another hand, in the corner. It was from my aunt, and run thus:—

"The Briars, Rochester.

"DEAR PAUL,

"I am rejoiced to say, there is a good chance of a situation for you with handsome pay, and most agreeable duty. You are to come down here at once, and see your uncle, but on no account let it be known that I have mentioned to you the prospect of employment.

"Your affectionate aunt,

"JANE MORSE."

I took the morning train, and arrived at Rochester by nine o'clock, remembering, not without pain, my last experiences of my uncle's hospitality. I breakfasted at the inn, and only arrived at the house when he had finished his morning meal, and was smoking his pipe in the garden.

“What wind blows you down here, lad?” cried he. “Where are you bound for now?”

“You forget, my dear,” said my aunt, “you told me the other evening, you would be glad to see Paul.”

“Humph!” said he with a grunt. “I’ve been a thinking over it since, and I suspect it wouldn’t do. He’d be making a mess of it, the way he does of everything; that blessed luck of his never leaves him, eh?”

Seeing that this was meant as an interrogation, I replied faintly: “You’re quite right, uncle. If I am to depend on my good fortune, it will be a bad look-out for me.”

“Not that I value what is called luck a rush,” cried he with energy. “I have had luck, but I had energy, industry, thrift, and perseverance. If I had waited for luck, I’d have lived pretty much like yourself, and I don’t know anything to be very proud of in that, eh?”

“I am certainly not proud of my position, sir.”

“I don’t understand what you mean by your

position; but I know I'd have been a coal-heaver rather than live on my relations. I'd have sold sulphur-matches, I'd have been a porter!"

"Well, sir, I suppose I may come to something of that kind yet; a little more of the courteous language I am now listening to will make the step less difficult"

"Eh?—What! I don't comprehend. Do you mean anything offensive?"

"No, dear, he does not," broke in my aunt, "he only says, he'd do anything rather than be a burden to his family, and I'm sure he would; he seems very sorry about all the trouble he has cost them."

My uncle smoked on for several minutes without a word; at last, he came to the end of his pipe, and having emptied the ashes, and gazed ruefully at the bowl, he said: "There's no more in the fellow than in that pipe! Not a bit. I say," cried he aloud, and turning to me, "you've had to my own knowledge as good as a dozen chances, and you've never succeeded in one of them."

“It’s all true,” said I sorrowfully.

“Owing to luck, of course,” said he scornfully; “luck makes a man lazy, keeps him in bed when he ought to be up and at work ; luck makes him idle, and gets him plucked for his examinations. I tell you this, sir : I’d rather a man would give me a fillip on the nose than talk to me about luck. If there’s a word in the language I detest and hate, it is luck.”

“I’m not in love with it myself, sir,” said I, trying to smile.

“ Did you ever hear of luck mending a man’s shoes, or paying his washerwoman ? Did luck ever buy a beef-steak, eh ? ”

“That might admit of discussion.”

“Then let me have no discussion. I like work, and I dislike wrangling. Listen to me, and mend now, sir. I want an honest, sober, fixed determination;—no caprice, no passing fancy. Do you believe you are capable of turning over a new leaf, and sitting down steadily to the business of life, like a patient, industrious, respectable man who desires to earn his own bread, and not live on the earnings of others ? ”

“I hope so.”

“Don’t tell me of hope, sir. Say you will or you will not.”

“I will,” said I resolutely.

“You will work hard, rise early, live frugally, give up dreaming about this, that, or the other chance, and set to like a fellow that wants to do his own work with his own hands?”

“I promise it all.”

My uncle was neither an agreeable nor a very clear exponent of his views, and I shall save my reader and myself some time and unpleasantness if I reduce the statement he made to me to a few words. A company had been formed to start an hydropathic establishment on a small river, a tributary of the Rhine, —the Lahn. They had acquired at a very cheap rate of purchase an old feudal castle and its surrounding grounds, and had converted the building into a most complete and commodious residence, and the part which bordered the river into a beautiful pleasure-ground. The tinted drawings which represented various views of the castle and the terraced gardens,

were something little short of fairyland in captivity. Nor was the pictorial effect lessened by the fact that figures on horseback and on foot, disporting in boats, or driving in carriages, gave a life and movement to the scene, and imparted to it the animation and enjoyment of actual existence. The place of director was vacant, and I was to be appointed to it. My salary was to be three hundred a year, but my table, my horses, my servants,—in fact, all my household, were to be maintained for me on a liberal scale; and my duties were to be pretty much what I pleased to make them. My small smattering of two or three languages,—exalted by my uncle into the reputation of a polyglot,—had recommended me to the “Direction;” and as my chief function was to entertain a certain number of people twice or thrice a week at dinner, and suggest amusements to fill up their time, it was believed that my faculties were up to the level of such small requirements.

From the doctor down to the humblest menial all were to be under my sway; and as the establishment numbered above a hundred officials,

the command was extensive, if not very dignified. I will own frankly, I was out of myself with joy at the prospect; nor could all the lowering suggestions of my uncle, and the vulgar cautions he instilled, prevent my feeling delighted with my good fortune. I need not say what resolves I made; what oaths I registered in my own heart to be a good and faithful steward, and while enjoying to the full the happiness of my fortunate existence, to neglect no item of the interests confided to me.

All that I had imagined or dreamed of the place itself was as nothing to the reality; nor shall I ever forget the sense of overwhelming delight in which I stood on the crest of the hill that looked down over the wooded glen and winding river; the deep-bosomed woods, the wandering paths of lawn or of moss, the gently-flowing stream in which the castle, with its tall towers, was tremblingly reflected, seemed to me like a princely possession, and for once I thought that Paul Gosslett had become the favourite child of fortune, and asked

myself what had I done to deserve such luck as this ?

If habit and daily use deaden the pangs of suffering, and enable us to bear with more of patience the sorrows of adverse fortune, they, on the other hand, serve to dull the generous warmth of that gratitude we first feel for benefits, and render us comparatively indifferent to enjoyments which, when first tasted, seemed the very ecstasy of bliss. I am sorry to make this confession ; sorry to admit that after some months at "Lahneck," I was, although very happy and satisfied, by no means so much struck by the beauty of the place and the loveliness of the scenery as on my first arrival, and listened to the raptures of the new comers with a sort of compassionate astonishment. Not but I was proud of the pretentious edifice, proud of its lofty towers and battlemented terraces, its immense proportion, and splendid extent. It was, besides, a complete success as an enterprise. We were always full ; applications for rooms poured in incessantly, and when persons vacated their quarters, any change of mind

made restitution impossible. I believed I liked the despotism I exercised ; it was a small, common-place sort of sovereignty over bath-men and kitchen-folk, it is true ; but in the extent of my command I discovered a kind of dignity, and in the implicit obedience and deference, I felt something like princely sway.

As the host, too, I received a very flattering amount of homage ; foreigners always yield a willing respect to anything in authority, and my own countrymen soon caught up the habit, as though it implied a knowledge of life and the world. I had not the slightest suspicion that my general manners or bearing were becoming affected by these deferences, till I accidentally overheard a cockney observe to his wife, "I think he's pompious," a censure that made me very unhappy, and led me to much self-examination and reflection.

Had I really grown what the worthy citizen called "pompious ;" had I become puffed up by prosperity, and over exalted in self-conceit ? If so, it were time to look to this at once.

The directors generally were well pleased

with me. Very gratifying testimonials of their approval reached me; and it was only my uncle's opposition prevented my salary being augmented. "Don't spoil the fellow," he said; "you'll have him betting on the Derby, or keeping a yacht at Cowes, if you don't look out sharp. I'd rather cut him down a hundred than advance him fifty." This fiat from my own flesh and blood decided the matter. I sulked on this. I had grown prosperous enough to feel indignant, and I resolved to afford myself the well-to-do luxury of discontent. I was therefore discontented. I professed that to maintain my position,—whatever that meant,—I was obliged to draw upon my own private resources; and I went so far as to intimate to the visitors that if I hadn't been a man of some fortune the place would be my ruin! Of course my hint got bruited about, and the people commonly said, "If Gosslett goes, the whole concern will break up. They'll not easily find a man of good private fortune, willing to spend his money here, like Gosslett," and such like, till I vow and declare I began to believe my

own fiction, and regard it as an indelible fact. If my letter was not on record, I would not now believe the fact, but the document exists, and I have seen it, where I actually threaten to send my resignation if something,—I forget what,—is not speedily conceded to my demands; and it was only on receiving an admonition in the mild vein peculiar to my uncle that I awoke to a sense of my peril, and of what became me.

I know that there are critics who, pronouncing upon this part of my career, will opine that the cockney was right, and that I had really lost my head in my prosperity. I am not disposed to say now that there might not have been some truth in this judgment. Things are generally going on tolerably well with a man's material interests when he has time to be dyspeptic. Doctors assure us that savage nations, amidst whom the wants of life call for daily, hourly efforts, amidst whom all is exigency, activity, and resource, have no dyspepsia. If, then, I had reasoned on my condition,—which I did not,—I should have

seen that the world went too smoothly with me, and that, in consequence, my health suffered. Just as the fish swallow stones to aid the digestion, we need the accidents and frictions of life to triturate our moral pabulum, and render it more easily assimilable to our constitutions. With dyspepsia I grew dull, dispirited, and dissatisfied. I ceased to take pleasure in all that formerly had interested me. I neglected duty, and regarded my occupation with dislike. My house dinners, which once I took an especial pride in, seeking not only that the wines and the cookery should be excellent, but that their success as social gatherings should attract notoriety, I now regarded with apathy. I took no pains about either company or cookery, and, in consequence, contrarieties and bad contrasts now prevailed where before all had been in perfect keeping and true artistic shading. My indolence and indifference extended to those beneath me. Where all had once been order, discipline, and propriety, there now grew up carelessness, disorder, and neglect. The complaints of the

visitors were incessant. My mornings were passed in reading. I rarely replied to the representations and demands of outraged guests. At last the public press became the channel of these complaints, and "Publicola," and "One who had Suffered," and a number of similarly named patriots declared that the hydropathic establishment at Lahneck was a delusion and a sham; that it was a camp of confusion and mismanagement, and that though a certain P Gosslett was the nominal director, yet that visitors of three months' standing averred they had never seen him, and the popular belief was that he was a nervous invalid who accepted a nominal duty in recompense for the benefit of air and climate to himself. "How," wrote one indignant correspondent of the Times, "how the company who instituted this enterprise, and started it on a scale of really great proportions, can find it to their advantage to continue this Mr. Gosslett in a post he so inadequately fills, is matter of daily astonishment, to those who have repaired to Lahneck for healthful exercise and amusement, and only found there

indifferent attendance and universal inattention."

From the day this appeared I was peppered at every post with letters from the secretary, demanding explanations, reports, returns, what not. The phrase, "The Managing Committee, who are hourly less and less satisfied with Mr. Gosslett's conduct," used to pass through all my dreams.

As for my uncle, his remarks were less measured. One of his epistles, I have it still by me, runs thus: "What do you mean? Are you only an idiot, or is there some deeper rascality under all this misconduct? Before I resigned my place at the Board yesterday, I gave it as my deliberate opinion that a warrant should be issued against you for fraud and malversation, and that I would hail your conviction as the only solace this nefarious concern could afford me. Never dare to address me again. I have forbidden your aunt to utter your name in my presence."

I don't know how it was, but I read this with as much unconcern as though it had been

an advertisement about the Sydenham trousers or Glenfield starch. There must be a great dignity in a deranged digestion, for it certainly raises one above all the smaller excitements and conditions of passing events; and when on the same morning that this epistle arrived the steward came to inform me that of three hundred and twenty-four rooms twelve only were occupied, though this was what would be called the height of the season, I blandly remarked, "Let us not be impatient, Mr. Deechworth, they'll come yet." This was in June; by July the twelve diminished to eight. No new arrival came; and as August drew to a close we had three! All September,—and the place was then in full beauty,—the mountains glowing with purple and scarlet heath, the cactus plants on the terrace in blossom, the Virginian acanthus hanging in tangled masses of gorgeous flowers from every tree, the river ever plashing with the leaping trout,—we had not one stranger within our gates. My morning report ran, "Arrivals, none; departures, none; present in house, none;" and when I put "Paul

Gosslett " at the bottom of this, I only wonder why I did not take a header into the Lahn !

As we had at this period eighty-four servants in the house, sixteen horses in the stables, and a staff of thirty-two gardeners and boatmen, not to speak of runners, commissionaires, and general loungers, I was not amazed when a telegram came in these words : " Close the house, place Deechworth in charge, and come over to London." To this I replied, " Telegram received ; compliance most undesirable. Autumn season just opening. Place in full beauty.—P. G."

I will not weary the reader with a mere commercial wrangle ;—how the Committee reproached me, and how I rejoined ; how they called names, and I hinted at defamation ; how they issued an order for my dismissal, and I demurred and demanded due notice. We abused each other all September, and opened October in full cry of mutual attack and defence. By this time, too, we were at law. They applied for a " mandamus " to get rid of me, and my counsel argued that I was without

the four seas of the realm, and could not be attacked. They tried to reach me by the statute of frauds, but there was no treaty with Nassau, and I could not be touched. All this contention and quarrelling was like sulphate of quinine to me,—I grew robust and strong under the excitement, and discovered a lightness of heart and a buoyancy of nature, I had believed had long left me for ever; and though they stopped my salary and dishonoured my drafts, I lived on fruit and vegetables, and put the garrison on the same diet, with a liberal allowance of wine, which more than reconciled them to the system.

So matters went on till the ninth of October, —a memorable day to me, which I am not like to forget. It was near sunset, and I sat on the terrace, enjoying the delicious softness of the evening air, and watching the varying tints on the river, as the golden and green light came slanting through the trees and fell upon the water, when I heard the sound of wheels approaching. There had been a time when such sounds would have awakened no attention, when

arrivals poured in incessantly, and the coming or the departing guest evoked nothing beyond the courtesy of a greeting. Now, however, a visitor was an event; and as the post-horses swept round the angle of the wood, and disappeared behind a wing of the castle, I felt a strange sensation through my heart, and a soft voice seemed to say, "Paul, Fate is dealing with you now." I fell into a reverie, however, and soon forgot all about the arrival, till Mr. Deechworth came up with a card in his hand. "Do you know this name, sir,—Mrs. Pultney Dacre? She has only her maid with her, but seems a person of condition." I shook my head in ignorance of the name, and he went on: "She wants rooms on the ground floor, where she can walk out into the garden; and I have thought of No. 4."

"No. 4, Deechworth? that apartment costs sixty francs a day."

"Well, sir, as there are few people now in the house,"—this was an euphemism for none,—"I have said she might have the rooms for forty."

"It may be done for one week," said I, "but take care to caution her not to mention it to her friends. We have trouble enough with those tiresome people in London without this. What is she like?"

"A very handsome figure, sir; evidently young; but had a double veil down, and I couldn't see her face."

"How long does she talk of staying?"

"A month, sir. A husband is expected back from India early in November, and she is to wait for him here."

"So," said I thoughtfully, and I am sure I cannot say why, thoughtfully, "she is waiting for her husband's arrival."

"Those young women whose husbands are in India are always pretty; haven't you remarked that, sir?"

"I can't say that I have, Deechworth. These are speculations of a kind that do not occur to me. Let her have No. 4," and with the air of one who dismissed the theme, I waved my hand, and sent him away.

No. 4,—for so the occupant was called,—

her name being entirely merged in her number,—never appeared in the grounds, nor showed in any way. The small garden which belonged to her apartment had a separate enclosure of its own, and within this she walked every evening. How she passed her days I know not. I was told that she sang like an angel, but I never heard her. She was, however, a most persistent bather. There was not a douche in the establishment she did not try, and, possibly by way of pastime, she was constantly experimenting on new modes and fashions of bathing.

When the establishment had been crowded and in full work, I had my time so completely occupied that I had little difficulty in keeping my mind estranged from the gossip and tittle-tattle which beset such places ; but now, when the roof sheltered a single guest, it was wonderful how, in spite of all my determination on the subject, I became perversely uneasy to hear about her ; to know whether she read or wrote ; whether she got letters or answered them ; what she thought of the place ; whether

she was or was not pleased with it; did she praise the camelias? What did she think of the cook? She was evidently "gourmet," and the little dinners she ordered were remarkable for a taste and piquancy that stimulated my curiosity; for there is something very significant in this phase of the feminine nature; and when I heard she liked her ortolans "au beurre d'anchois," I confess I wanted much to see her.

This evidently was not an easy matter, for she courted retirement, and her maid let it be known that if her mistress found herself in the slightest degree molested by strangers, or her privacy invaded, she would order her horses, and set off for somewhere else without a moment's hesitation. I was obliged, therefore, to respect this intimation. First of all, I felt that as long as No. 4 remained I was sustained in my resolve not to close the establishment. I was like a deposed monarch at whose residence one envoy still remained, and whose sovereignty therefore was yet recognised, and I clung to this last link that united me to the

world of material interest with intense eagerness.

I ventured to present Mr. Gosslett's respectful compliments in a small note, and inquire if Mrs. Pultney Dacre would wish to see the Park, in which case his phaeton and ponies were always at her disposal, as also his boat if she felt disposed to take an airing on the river; but a few lines declined these offers, in very polite terms it is true, yet in a fashion that said, "No more of these attentions, Paul"—at least it was thus I read her.

Although my contention with the company still continued, and some new menace of law was sure to reach me by every second post, and my own counsel feelingly warned me that I hadn't an inch of ground to stand on, and my costs when "cast" would be something overwhelming, I had steeled myself so thoroughly to all consequences, had so resolved to make the most of the present, that I read these minatory documents with an unmoved heart, and a degree of placid composure that now strikes me as something heroic.

I was sitting one evening in study, thinking over these things,—not depressively, not desperately; for, strangely enough, since misfortune had befallen me, I had acquired a most wonderful stock of equanimity, but I was canvassing with myself what was to come next, when the fatal hour struck, as strike it must, that sounded my expulsion from Eden, when a gentle tap came to my door. I said, “Come in,” and Virginie, Mrs. Dacre’s French maid, entered. She was profuse of apologies for “deranging” me. She was in despair at the bare thought of interrupting I do not know what or which of my learned occupations, but her mistress had had an accident!

“An accident!” I started as I repeated the word.

“Oh! it was not serious,” she said, with a sweet smile. “It was only troublesome, as occurring in a remote spot, and to a person who like Madame was of such refined delicacy, and who could not bear consulting a strange physician,—her own doctor was on his way from India,”—she went on rambling thus, so

that it was with difficulty I learned at last that Madame, when feeding the gold fish in the pond of the garden, had stepped on the rock-work and turned her ankle. The pain was very great, and Virginie feared something had been broken, though Madame was certain it was a mere sprain ; and now, as the doctor has been dismissed, Madame wished to know where medical advice could be soonest obtained. I at once declared I was fully competent to treat such an injury. I had studied surgery, and could certainly pronounce whether the case was a grave one or a mere passing accident. Virginie smiled dubiously.

“Monsieur was very young. Madame never consulted a doctor under fifty-five or sixty.”

“Possibly,” suggested I, “in an ordinary case, and where there were time and opportunity to choose ; but here, and with an accident, an accident that if neglected or improperly treated,”—

“Ah, mon Dieu !” cried she, “don’t say it ! Don’t say there might be unhappy results ; come at once and see her !” She almost

dragged me along, such was her impatience, to her mistress's room, and in less than a minute I was standing beside a sofa in a half-darkened room, where a lady lay, her face closely veiled, and a large shawl so enveloping her that all guess as to her figure or probable age was impossible. A light cambric handkerchief was spread over one foot, which rested on a cushion, and this kerchief the maid hastily snatched away as I approached, saying,—

“Monsieur is a doctor himself, Madame, and will cure you immediately.”

“La!” cried she, pointing to the foot.
“La!”

And certainly I needed no more formal invitation to gaze on a foot and ankle of such faultless mould and symmetry as never, even in the Greek statues, had I seen equalled. Whether there had not been time for the process of inflammation to have set up swelling or disfigurement, or whether the injury itself had been less grave than might have been apprehended, I am not able to say; but the beautiful proportions of that rounded instep, the

tapering of the foot, the hollowing of the sole, the slightly mottled marble of the flesh, the blue veins swelling through the transparent skin, were all uninjured and unmarred. Ivory itself could not have been more smoothly turned than the ankle, nor of a more dazzling whiteness. To have been permitted to kneel down and kiss that foot, I would have sworn myself her slave for ever. I suppose I must have shown some signs of the rapture that was consuming me, for the maid said—

“What does the man mean? has he lost his senses?”

“I must examine the part,” said I, and kneeling down, I proceeded with what I imagined to be a most chirurgical air, to investigate the injury. As a worshipper might have touched a holy relic, I suffered my hand to glide over that beautifully rounded instep, but all so delicately and gently that I could not say whether the thrill that touch sent through me was not the act of my own nerves. She seemed, however, to tremble, her foot moved slightly, and a gentle action of her

shoulders like a shudder bespoke pain. It was the sort of movement that one might make in being tickled, and as great agony causes this movement occasionally, I said, "I trust I have not hurt you? I'd not have done so for worlds." She took her handkerchief and pressed it to her face, and I thought she sobbed, but she never said a word.

"Alors!" cried the maid. "What do you say is to be done?"

"Ice," said I. "Iced water and perfect repose."

"And where are we to get ice in this barbarous place?"

"Madame," said I, "the place is less savage than you deem, and ice shall be procured. There is a monastery at Offenbach where they have ice throughout the year. I will despatch an estafette there at once."

The lady bent forward, and whispered something in the maid's ear.

"Madame desires to thank you sincerely," said the maid. "She is much impressed by your consideration and kindness."

“I will return in a couple of hours,” said I, with a most doctorial sententiousness, and in reality eagerly desiring to be alone, and in the privacy of my own room, before I should break out in those wild ecstasies which I felt were struggling within me for utterance.

I sat down to make a clean breast of it in these confessions, but I must ask my reader to let me pass over unrecorded the extravagances I gave way to when once more alone.

There are men,—I am one of them,—who require,—constitutionally require,—to be in love. That necessity which Don Quixote proclaimed to be a condition of knightly existence,—the devotion to a mistress,—is an essential to certain natures. This species of temperament pertained to me in my boyhood. It has followed me through life with many pains and suffering, but also with great compensations. I have ever been a poor man,—my friends can tell that I have not been a lucky one,—and yet to be rich and fortunate together, I would not resign that ecstasy, that sentiment of love which, though its object may have

changed, has still power to warm up the embers of my heart, and send through me a glow that revives the days of my hot youth and my high hopes.

I was now in love, and cared as little for Boards of Directors and resolutions passed in committee as for the ordinances of the Grand Lama. It might rain mandamuses and warrants, they had no power to trouble me. As I wended my way to No. 4 with my bowl of ice, I felt like a votary bearing his offering to the shrine of his patron saint. My gift might lie on the altar, but the incense of my devotion soared up to heaven.

I would gladly have visited her every hour, but she would only permit me to come twice a day. I was also timid, and when Virginie said my ten minutes was up I was dismissed. I tried to bribe Virginie, but the unworthy creature imagined, with the levity of her nation, I had designs on her own affections, and threatened to denounce me to her mistress, a menace which cost me much mortification and more money.

I don't know that the cure made great progress, perhaps I have learned since why this was so—at all events, I pursued my treatment with assiduity, and was rewarded with a few soft-voiced words, as thus: "How kind you are!" "What a gentle hand you have!" "How pleasant that ice is!" At length she was able to move about the room. I wished to offer my arm, but she declined. Virginie was strong enough to support her. How I detested that woman! But for her, how many more opportunities had I enjoyed of offering small services and attentions! Her very presence was a perpetual restraint. She never took her eyes off me while I was in the room with her mistress—black-beady, inexpressive eyes for the most part, but with something devilish in their inscrutability that always frightened me. That she saw the passion that was consuming me, that she read me in my alternate paroxysm of delight or despair, was plain enough to me, but I could not make her my friend. She would take my presents freely, but always with the air of one whose silence

was worth buying at any price, but whose co-operation or assistance no sum could compass. Her very mode of accepting my gifts had something that smote terror into me. She never thanked me, nor even affected gratitude. She would shake her head mournfully and gloomily, as though matters had come to a pretty pass between us, and as though some dreadful reckoning must one day be expected to account for all this corruption. "Ah, Monsieur Gosslett," said she one day with a sigh, "what a precipice we are all standing beside! Have you thought of the ruin you are leading us to?" These were very strange words, and though I took my watch and chain from my pocket, and gave them to her in order to induce her to explain her meaning, she only burst into tears and rushed out of the room. Was I then the happiest of mortals or the most wretched? such was the problem that drove sleep that long night from my eyelids, and found me still trying to solve it when the day broke.

Days would often pass now without Mrs.

Dacre permitting me to visit her, and then Virginie significantly hinted that she was right in this, that it was for my good as well as her own, and so on. I mourned over my banishment and bewailed it bitterly. "One would think, sir, you forget my mistress was married," said Virginie to me one day; and I protest it was no more than the truth. I had completely, utterly, forgotten it, and the stern fact thus abruptly announced almost felled me to the earth.

Mrs. Dacre had promised to take a drive with me as soon as she felt able to bear the motion of a carriage, but though I often recalled the pledge, she found excuses of one kind or other to defer performance, and as I now rarely saw her, she would write me a line, sometimes two lines, on a scrap of paper, which Virginie would lay open on my table and generally shake her head very meaningfully as I read it.

If Mrs. Dacre's notes were very brief, they were not less enigmatical, — she was the strangest writer that ever put pen to paper.

Thus to give an instance: the ice application she always referred to as, "my coldness," and she would say, "How long is your coldness to continue, have I not had enough of it yet? This coldness is becoming tiresome, and if it be continued, how am I to go out with you?" In another note, referring to our intended drive, she says, "If it is a question of running away, I must have a word to say first, for though I believe you have no fears on that score, I am not so courageous." Virginie had been telling stories about my ponies; they were frisky, it is true, and it was thus her mistress alluded to them. Some disparagement of me as a whip provoked this remark from her. "As the time draws nearer I ask myself, Shall I trust myself to your guidance? Who can say what may come of it?"

At last came this one line: "I have summoned up all my courage, and I will go with you this evening. Come up at eight, and I will be ready." I ought to have mentioned before this that for nigh three weeks a vulgar-looking man, middle-aged and robust, had

come to take the waters, and though he only spoke a few words of bad French, being English, had continued to put himself on terms of intimacy with all the subordinates of the household, and was constantly seen laughing with the boatmen and trying to converse with the gardeners.

Deechworth had conceived suspicion about him from the first, he connected him with the law proceedings that the company had instituted against me, and warned me to be cautious of the man. His opinion was that he belonged to the "Force." "I know it, sir," said he, "by his walk and his laugh." The detectives, according to Deechworth, have a laugh quite peculiar to themselves, it never takes them off what they are saying or thinking about. In fact, it is like the bassoon in a band, it serves just to mark the time while the air is being played by the other instruments.

"I don't like that Mr. Bracken, sir," Deechworth would say, "he ain't here for no good, you'll see, sir;" and it is not improbable

that I should have perfectly agreed with this opinion if I had ever troubled my head about him at all, but the fact was my mind was very differently occupied. All Scotland Yard and Sir Richard himself might have been domiciled at the establishment without their ever giving me a moment of uneasy reflection.

Whether Mrs. Dacre's scruples were those of prudery or cowardice, whether she dreaded me as a companion or feared me as a coachman, I cannot say, but she constantly put off our intended drive, and though occasionally the few words in which she made her apologies set my heart half wild with delight, simply because I pleased to read them in a sense of my own invention, yet I grew feverish and uneasy at these delays. At last there came the one line in pencil, "I have made up my mind I will go with you to-morrow evening." It is in no extravagance or mock rapture I say it, but in plain homely truth, I would not have changed that scrap of paper for a cheque of ten thousand on Coutts.

It was my habit to lay all the little notes I

received from her before me on my writing-table, and as I passed them under review to weave out for myself a story of the progress of my love. The servants who waited on me, and who alone entered my study, were foreigners, and ignorant of English, so that I could permit myself this indulgence without fear. Now on the afternoon on which I had received the latest of her despatches, I sauntered out into the wood to be alone with my own thoughts unmolested and undisturbed. I wandered on for hours, too happy to count the time, and too deeply lost in my imaginings to remember anything but my own fancies. What was to come of this strange embroglio in which I now stood; how was Fate about to deal with me? I had clearly arrived at a point where the roads led right and left. Which was I to take, and which was the right one?

Thus canvassing and discussing with myself, it was very late ere I got back to the castle, but I carried the key of a small portal gate that admitted me to my own quarters unobserved, and I could enter or pass out unnoticed. As I

found myself in my study and lit my lamp, I turned to my writing-table. I started with amazement on discovering that the little notes and scraps of paper which bore Mrs. Dacre's writing had disappeared. These, and a small note-book, a sort of diary of my own, had been taken away; and that the act was not that of a common thief was clear, from the fact that a valuable silver inkstand and an onyx seal mounted in gold, and some other small objects of value lay about untouched. A cold sweat broke over me as I stood there overwhelmed and panic-stricken by this discovery. The terrors of a vague and undefined danger loom over a man with an intensity far greater than the fears of a known and palpable peril. I examined the fastenings of the door and the windows to see whether force had been used, but there was no sign of such. And as I had locked the door when leaving and found it locked on my return, how had this thief found entrance except by a key? I rung the bell, but the servants were all in bed, and it was long before any one replied to my summons.

Of course, servant-like, they had seen nothing, heard nothing. I sent for Deechworth; he was asleep, and came unwillingly and angry at being routed out of bed. He, too, knew nothing. He questioned me closely as to whether I had seen the papers on my table before I left home for my walk, and half vexed me by the pertinacity of his examination, and, finally, by the way in which he depreciated the value of my loss, and congratulated me on the circumstance that nothing of real worth had been abstracted. This was too much for my patience, and I declared that I had rather the thief had left me without a coat, or without a shilling, than taken these precious scraps of paper. "Oh," said he, with a sort of sneer, "I had not the slightest suspicion of the value you attached to them." "Well, sir," said I, losing all control over my passion, "now that you see it, now that you hear it, now that you know it, will you tell me at what price you will restore them to me?"

"You mean that it was I who took them?" said he quietly, and without any show of warmth.

“I don’t suppose you will deny it,” was my answer.

“That will do, Mr. Gosslett,” said he; “that’s quite enough. I hope to be able to teach you that it’s one thing to defy a board of directors, and it’s another to defame a respectable man. I’ll make you smart for this, sir,” and with these words he turned away and left the room.

I don’t know when or how the servants retired, whether I dismissed them, or whether they went of their own accord. I was like a madman. My temper excited to the last limits of reason, impelled me to this or that act of insanity. At one moment I thought of hastening after Deechworth, and with a revolver in my hand compelling him to give up the stolen papers, and I shuddered as to what I should do if he refused. At another, I determined to follow him, and offer him everything I had in the world for them: for all this time I had worked myself up to the conviction that he, and he alone, was the thief. Oh, thought I, if I had but the aid of one of those clever fellows of the detective order, whose skill wants but the

faintest clue to trace out these mysteries! and suddenly I bethought me of Mr. Bracken, whom Deechworth himself had pronounced to be "one of the Force."

I rung my bell, and desired Mr. Bracken might be sent to me. The messenger was a long time absent, and came at last to say that Mr. Bracken had left the castle that evening, and taken all his luggage with him. The tidings struck me like a blow,—here, then, was the thief! And for what purpose could such a theft have been accomplished? "Tell Mr. Deechworth I want him," cried I, being no less eager to make him my deepest apologies for my false accusation, than to consult his strong common sense in my difficulty.

The servant returned to say Mr. Deechworth had gone too. He had left the castle almost immediately after our stormy interview, and was already miles away on his road to the Rhine.

In my misery and desolation, in that abandonment to utter terror and confusion in which, with the drowning instinct, one

snatches at straws, I sent to know if I could speak to Mrs. Daere, or even her maid. How shall I describe my horror as I heard that they also were gone ! They had left soon after Mr. Bracken, in fact, the post-horses that took them away had passed Mr. Bracken at the gate of the park.

I know no more how the rest of the night was passed by me, how the hours were spent till day-break, than I could recount the incidents of delirium in fever. I must have had something like a paroxysm of insanity, for I appear to have rushed from room to room, calling for different people, and in tones of heart-rending entreaty begging that I might not be deserted. Towards morning I slept, slept so soundly, that the noises of the house did not disturb me. It was late in the afternoon when I awoke. The servant brought me my coffee and my letters, but I bade him leave me, and fell off to sleep again. In this way, and with only such sustenance as a cup of milk or coffee would afford, I passed fourteen days, my state resembling that of a man labour-

ing under concussion of the brain; indeed, so closely did the symptoms resemble those of this affection, that the doctor carefully examined my head to see whether I had not incurred some actual injury. It was five weeks before I could leave my bed, and crawl down with difficulty to my study. The table was covered with the accumulated letters of thirty odd posts, and I turned over the envelopes, most of which indicated communications from the company. There was also one in my uncle's hand. This I opened and read. It was in these words:—

“ So, sir, not satisfied with a life of indolence and dependence, you have now added infamy to your worthlessness, and have not even spared the members of your own family the contagion of your vice. If you can give information as to the present abode of your wretched victim, do so, as the last amends in your power, and the last act of reparation, before you are consigned to that gaol in which it is to be hoped you will end your days.”

I read this till my head reeled. Who were

the members of my family I had contaminated or corrupted? Who was my wretched victim? And why I was to die in prison I knew not. And the only conclusion I could draw from it all was, that my uncle was hopelessly mad, and ought to be shut up.

A strange-looking, coarse-papered document, that till then had escaped my notice, now caught my eye. It was headed "Court of Probate and Divorce," and set forth that on a certain day in term the case of "MacNamara versus MacNamara, Gosslett, co-respondent," would come on for trial; the action being to obtain a rule nisi for divorce, with damages against the co-respondent.

A notice of service, duly signed by one of my own people, lay beside this; so that at last I got a faint glimmering of what my uncle meant, and clearly descried what was implied by my "victim."

I believe that most readers of the Times or the Morning Post could finish my story; they at all events might detail the catastrophe with

more patience and temper than I could. The MacNamara divorce was a nine-days' scandal. And "if the baseness of the black-hearted iniquity of the degraded creature who crept into a family as a suppliant that he might pollute it with dishonour; who tracked his victim, as the Indian tracks his enemy, from lair to lair—silent, stealthily, and with savage intensity—never faltering from any momentary pang of conscience, nor hesitating in his vile purpose from any passing gleam of virtue; if this wretch, stigmatised by nature with a rotten heart, and branded by a name that will sound appropriately in the annals of crime, for he is called Gosslett;"—if all this, and a great deal more in the same fashion, is not familiar to the reader, it is because he has not carefully studied the Demosthenic orations of the Court of Arches. In one word, I was supposed to have engaged the affections and seduced the heart of Mrs. MacNamara, who was a cousin of my own, and the daughter of the Rev. W Dudgeon, in whose house I had been "brought

up," &c. I had withdrawn her from her husband, and taken her to live with me at Lahneck under the name of Dacre, where our course of life — openly, fearlessly infamous — was proved by a host of witnesses ; in particular by a certain Virginie, maid of the respondent, who deposed to having frequently found me at her feet, and who confessed to have received costly presents to seduce her into favouring the cause of the betrayer. Mr. Bracken, a retired detective, who produced what were called the love-letters, amused the jury considerably by his account of my mad freaks and love-sick performances. As for Mrs. MacNamara herself, she entered no appearance to the suit ; and the decree nisi was pronounced, with damages of five thousand pounds, against Paul Gosslett, who the counsel declared was in "a position to pay handsomely for his vices, and who had ample means to afford himself the luxury of adultery." I was told that the mob were prepared to stone me if I had been seen ; and that, such was the popular excitement about me, a strong police

force was obliged to accompany a red-whiskered gentleman to his house because there was a general impression abroad that he was Gosslett.

Of course I need not say I never ventured back to England, and I indite this, my last confession, from a small village in Bohemía, where I live in board—partial board it is—with a very humble family, who, though not complimentary to me in many things, are profuse in the praises of my appetite.

I rarely see an English newspaper, but a *Galignani* fell in my way about a week ago, in which I read the marriage of Mrs. Mac-Namara with R. St. John, Esq., the then secretary of Legation at Rio. This piece of news gave me much matter of reflection as to my unhappy victim, and has also enabled me to unseal my lips about the bridegroom, of whom I knew something once before.

The man who is always complaining is the terror of his friends; hence, if nothing but bad luck attend me, I shall trouble the world

no more with my Confessions ; if Fate, however, should be pleased to smile ever so faintly on me, you shall hear once more from poor Paul Gosslett.

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